BASQUERIE

ELEANOR MERCEIN

(MRS. KELLY)

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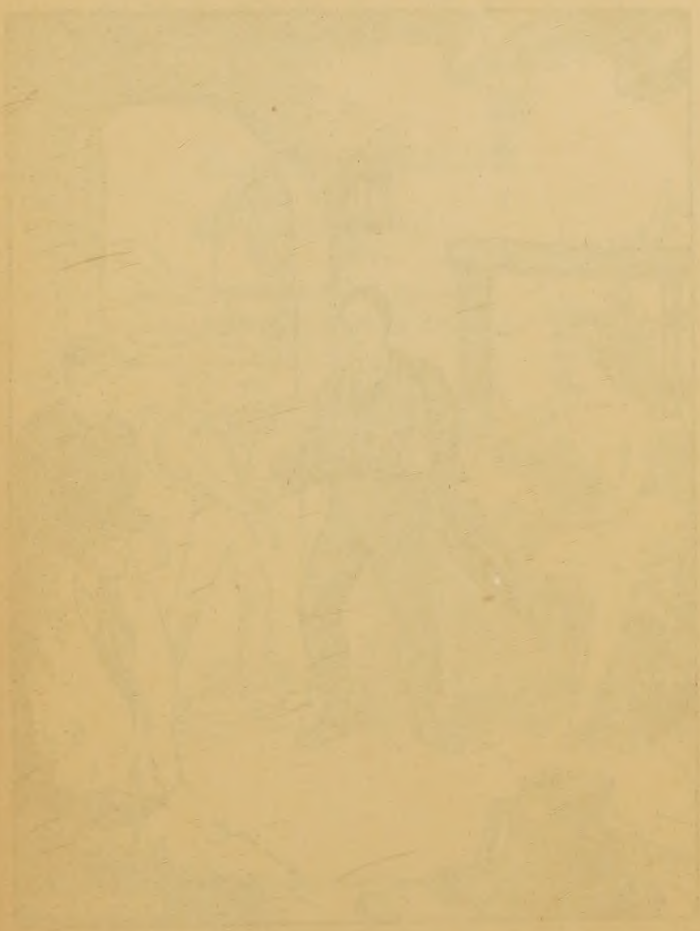

"WHY DO YOU TWO IDLE THERE? DO YOU FORGET THE HAY?"

BASQUERIE

by

ELEANOR MERCEIN

(Mrs. Kelly)

With Illustrations by
KATHARINE MERRILL

"The vast lifting-up which is called the Pyrenees."
—PIERRE LOTI

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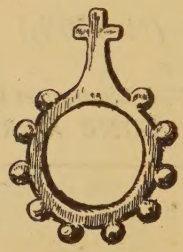

Printed in the United States of America

To
J. P.
Sporting Companion
of many a pleasant ghost-hunt
in far-off twilights,
this book is affectionately inscribed
by the Author

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BASQUERIE

CHAPTER ONE

BASQUERIE: the matter of a meeting and a parting

I

EMILY found Biarritz, now that the season was over, something of a bore; but they lingered on, partly because the rates were so much lower, and partly because her stepmother, Suzanne, seemed to be finishing up a little affair with the director. Emily shrugged at the thought. Duval was presentable enough, thanks to his opportunities; and of course Suzanne at her age had to take her men as she could get them; but really, a hotel director— Surely one might fly one's kite a little higher than that.

Some weeks earlier the beach, even at this early hour—that charming intimate curve of beach, like the dress circle of a theater—would have been brilliant with striped bathing tents, vivid great parasols, gayly dressed and undressed ladies of the three worlds: great, lesser, and half. Emily wondered in which of these she and Suzanne were usually classed by the onlookers. But what did they matter, the onlookers? There was still a yacht or two about. Emily had noticed a very nice one, Spanish probably, docked in the lower town, but the owners did not come to

the casino, or Emily would have met them. Duval was very useful in that way. Nobody of any importance was stopping at the hotel, merely a few domestic parties, of the onlooker class.

Emily yawned. She seemed, in her shapeless little-girl frock, with the pale waves of hair cropped close to her pretty head, very young and frail, her skin of that delicate magnolia pallor which is thick enough never to burn or freckle. . . .

Flowerlike every feature
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature.

And, indeed, a good deal of breath had been wasted in the effort here and there. Emily owed her unfrayed lilyhood, and also the fact that her exquisite, fragile little body was as muscular and active as that of a cat, to the dying counsels of her father—his best and practically his only legacy to her.

"The contours, my pet, are essential," Mr. Weldon had adjured her. "To keep really fit, exercise is advisable—swimming, riding, skiing, tennis, whatever is the *jeu* of the place, that you must do well; but not too well. Sports are as helpful in making acquaintance as a good dog, or going to the English church. Bridge, too, but in moderation, my pet; otherwise it is bad for the expression. And, of course, you will not be seen at the tables"—he meant the sort in casinos—"until after you are thirty. By that time you will have married, so it will not matter

what you do. But it is wretched form to appear sporting before thirty.

"With regard to marriage," went on this very experienced gentleman, "my advice to you is the same as in golf: Keep your eye on the ball. Remember that a prince, Oriental or Slavic, is the equivalent of a duke, Continental; of a baronet, English; and of a millionaire, American. No matter what distractions offer, no matter what temptations arise—and there will be temptations, or you are not my daughter—keep your eye on the ball."

She was his daughter, and she had done so. Poor dear papa! He, too, had known the difficulties which beset the path of a wandering beauty in Europe, none better; and he had done his best for her. Since he found himself unable to leave his daughter a suitable income, he had made what amend was possible; he had left her a stepmother who had one, and who could furnish as well the necessary background of chaperonage. Not that Suzanne as a background was all that could be desired, perhaps; but one did what one could. She was at least of an amiable and generous nature.

"I think," said the girl to herself, "that I shall go out into the Bay of Biscay and think things over." She always did her best thinking in the bathtub.

Since nobody was about to stare except a few natives, she did not bother to shroud her slim loveliness in a beach wrap, but ran out on to the nearer of the two little pine-clad promontories which jut out into the water and took a neat header. Then she turned

over on her back and let the Atlantic playfully slap at her face and tug at her with its undertow, while she thought.

There was a good deal to think about; for example, young Prince Abdul—only an Egyptian, to be sure, and almost dark enough to be doubtful; it was hard to shed one's American prejudices. But she loved his yacht and his string of polo ponies, and he adored her silvery blondness; and the dot was certainly no object. What had happened to put him off? Had she seemed too cool? And old Sir Harry Congers, correct, substantial as his appearance; he had been on the very point of speaking to mamma—as Suzanne became on occasion—when something had called him away from Biarritz. He had left a bushel or so of roses and a very pretty bracelet, but he had not returned. Why? Had she been too approachable?

There were moments when Emily confessed to a slight inward panic. Nearing thirty and nothing in sight! Was she never to have done with this roving from pillar to post, this robbing Peter, as it were, to keep from paying Paul? Could the trouble be Suzanne?

Poor dear papa, she had to admit, had rather overreached himself when he married that lady. If he could only have postponed his demise a little longer, until his child was safely settled in a suitable walk of life! An unattached father can do so much more for a girl than she can do for herself.

A wave slapped her suddenly too hard to be pleas-

ant, and she saw that she was in danger of being swept against the boiling rocks, where a man had recently, at a high tide like this, been pounded to a jelly. She exerted herself and got out of the caldron, but the effort left her tired. She thought she would land on the farther rocks, where the slope was gradual. But after a few moments she saw that she could not make it, and glanced over her shoulder to call the coast-guard boat which usually waited near that dangerous point. But the season was over; a frugal municipal government had withdrawn the boat.

"Well, well!" said Emily aloud. "Here I am in the Bay of Biscay with nobody to rely on but myself." Not, however, an unusual situation for her.

She struggled a little and swallowed water. "If I don't make it," she thought, "they'll find me in the surf in a very messy condition, and the newspapers will have headlines—The Beautiful Miss Weldon of Kentucky Drowned at Fashionable Biarritz—why must beauties always be from Kentucky or from Baltimore?—and Suzanne will have a chance to wear mourning again; which would suit her very well; so why struggle?"

She was roused from these macabre reflections by a voice which spoke to her out of the deep: "If mademoiselle will put her hand on my shoulder, please—" So a coast guard had been watching after all.

She lay in a cove on the rock island, resting, a little sick from the salt water she had swallowed,

glad of the sun that beat down upon her in that sheltered place. She wished she had more clothes on; the tide breeze was chilly, and after all, coast guards are men. But this one stood with his back to her, as far away as he could get; if the rock had been larger he would have been farther. It got smaller as the tide rose. She smiled to realize that. He was a handsome fellow, young, with straight black hair, high cheek bones, deep-set eyes; not a Spanish type, nor yet quite French. Emily looked him over appreciatively before she spoke.

"Thank you so much for saving me from a watery grave."

"It is nothing—mademoiselle, I mean, was still swimming quite strongly. I was not necessary."

"Oh, but you were! I was about to give up swimming. I wonder," she murmured idly, "if your name happens to be Neptune?"

"No, mademoiselle. My name is Esteban."

Still he would not look at her. She saw with amusement that he was embarrassed rather than intrigued by her appearance. Evidently this was no Frenchman.

"Neptune and siren alone on rock," she murmured, imagining the picture; and saw his cheek twitch a little as if he understood. "You need not wait, thank you," she added pleasantly.

"Mademoiselle has been good enough to say I was necessary—"

"Not now," she replied. "I shall not commit suicide today. You must remember your duties.

There may be other discouraged swimmers about."

He hesitated, and then said quietly, "Mademoiselle is mistaken in thinking me a coast guard. I was watching—only for mademoiselle."

"Oh!" It was her turn to be embarrassed. She looked at him more closely. There was something vaguely familiar in his appearance. The smooth skin, brown as an Indian's, tattoo marks on the chest like a sailor's, a fine athlete's figure—also, despite the shyness, his air of quiet confidence. It was difficult, she reflected, to be sure of a gentleman without his clothes on. Her rescuer wore only a scant swimming suit.

"I beg your pardon," she murmured. "You say you were watching for me?"

He replied surprisingly, with a sort of controlled fervor, "I have been watching for mademoiselle ever since the first moment I saw her."

She bit her lip. "Really? You are not stopping at our hotel, I think?"

He shook his head. There were other hotels near by, of course; there was that yacht in the lower town. "I am native here," he said.

Emily regretted her apology. Her head lifted haughtily. For a mere native he had been impertinent. But for all she knew there might be native gentlemen.

"You mean you are Basque?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, Basque."

"But you speak English remarkably well."

He said quietly, "To one who speaks the Euskara,

no language is impossible; in that we are like Russians. But I have been in England; also in America."

"In the United States?"

"In both Americas. Basques are a seafaring people."

"You are a sailor, you mean? A fisherman, perhaps?" She had heard of Basque whalers off Newfoundland.

"Both, mademoiselle; and other things."

Suddenly she knew where she had seen him; down in the lower town, working over a boat on the stocks, barefoot, his trousers rolled to the knee. She had realized for the first time how becoming the Basque costume was to a handsome man, the close-fitting *béret* worn over one ear, the wide red sash. She remembered, too, that the man had looked at her as he was doing now, with grave shy glances which turned away when they met hers. Emily was expert in such matters; she knew there was nothing to resent or fear in admiration such as this, no matter from whom it came. She decided to play Cophetua, as it were, to his beggar maid.

"Sit down here beside me," she said kindly—"you will have to soon, anyway, if this rock gets any smaller—and tell me about Basques. It is so strange to be living among a people of whom one knows nothing, whose life goes on independently of us, as if we were not here."

"It has been going on independently of you for thirty centuries," he remarked quietly. "You find

it strange to see a people deeply rooted as a forest; while we find it strange to see a people who wander about in families, like the Arabs, but without the Arab's tents, living in hotels, railway cars, other people's houses—"

Emily found herself somewhat on the defensive. "But the Basques are wanderers too; you said so yourself. Sailors and fishermen—"

"—and smugglers and at one time pirates," he finished for her. "Yes, mademoiselle; but with this difference: Basques return. The *etcheonda* is our home, our abiding place, no matter from how far we come to it."

"The *etcheonda?*"

"In Germany it is called the *Stammhaus;* in America—it is not called at all." He smiled gravely. "The *etcheonda* is the home to which one of our families belongs from generation to generation; where all the sons may bring their wives to live when they are done with roving; to whose shelter every member of the family has his right, and to which all pay tribute."

"No," said Emily thoughtfully, "in America it is not 'called at all,' because it does not exist. With most of us the nearest approach to an *etcheonda* would be an apartment building, changed every few years. Which is perhaps why we do so much family wandering."

"Doubtless, mademoiselle," he agreed.

Emily found the fellow oddly stimulating, intelligent; even humorous in a grave, simple way. And

he was right. Roots—was not that what they needed, people like her and her father; what they desperately wanted and somehow could never find? They had torn themselves loose from their own foothold, the place where they belonged; yet where was that place? Certainly not an ugly prairie town near Chicago, where she had happened to be born! Again the slight panic came over her. Nearing thirty and no haven in sight; youth gone, beauty going, her charm acquiring a rather professional edge. She pulled herself together with a shiver. What nonsense! Her beauty going, when she could see the reflection of it in the eyes of every man she met—even this enamored native?

"I wonder why you have been watching for me," she murmured. It was playing with fire, of course, but Emily wanted to play with fire just then; it gave her a fictitious sense of warmth.

"Because I could not help myself," he muttered. "On the beach, at the casino windows, beneath your terrace—I could not keep away." Still he did not look at her.

She shook her head gently. "I am afraid you have been falling a little in love with me, Esteban. You must not do that."

"Why?" he demanded abruptly.

She laughed a little. Why, indeed, when his respect was so extreme that he could not make up his mind to sit beside her? She shivered again, this time not from cold. The game was beginning—the old exciting game.

"Mademoiselle is chilled!" he exclaimed, noticing the shiver out of the back of his head, apparently. "It would be best to run about a little."

It would be best, thought Emily dryly, to swim straight back to shore; but aloud she said, "In bare feet, on these rocks? No, thank you." She looked up at him from under plaintive lashes. "If you want to go on saving my life, I really think you will have to come and—keep me warm yourself." Her tone was quite matter-of-fact.

The temptation had come upon her too suddenly to resist; the need of strong arms about her, the touch of that powerful shoulder on which she had rested as they swam. It was not the first time she had been aware of primitive emotions, but as a rule she did not yield to them; she merely used them. Nobody had warned her that emotions, like muscles, strengthen with use.

He was no longer glancing at her with swift, shy looks like caresses; he had turned to stare at her in startled questioning.

"Don't be afraid of me, Esteban," she smiled encouragingly. "I'm not afraid of you. See how I trust you?"

With a muttered exclamation he did as he was bid. His arm, stiff as a ramrod, encircled her coldly, but she could feel him trembling. Certainly this was no Frenchman! Even one of her own compatriots might have felt the national chivalry strained by such circumstances. She laughed a little, but she was trembling, too.

"You are trustworthy, aren't you?" she teased him. "Perhaps you'd better go then, or you might be tempted to kiss me. Just as you like, of course!"

"*Madre de Dios!*" he exclaimed, and made his choice.

The tide had turned when they swam slowly and easily back together; easily, because the tide went out more calmly than it had come in, slowly because below the point of pines they were to separate forever. Esteban did not know this, but Emily did.

"Look here! I don't want you to think American girls are all like this," she said suddenly, and rather oddly, considering that she rarely had anything to do with her compatriots. "We're not so bad as our bark—fortunately. We're rather decent as a rule. I hardly know what came over me—a touch of sun, perhaps."

He turned toward her a look of grave and happy understanding. "We Basques are called the children of the sun, mademoiselle. You are not accustomed to it. Do not fear! Love comes so, without warning, if the heart is ready. It was so that it came to me."

"You think this has been love, then?" she asked with some irony.

His answer shamed and touched her: "Have I not proof?"

She wondered about it as they breasted the long waves together, side by side, gazing at each other. She wanted to remember how he looked, always. Was he right, this stranger whom she had kissed

and would never see again? Love—the meaning of things, the reason for them? No wonder, she thought rather piteously, that people were always trying to find it.

Emily had matched her skill with famous amorists more than once, and had not lost. True, she had not won, either; but there are contests in which not to lose is sufficient victory. Despite a somewhat intensive experience, she had remained not so much skeptical of love as entirely ignorant of it. She believed it, indeed, one of those picturesque myths in which people conspire to pretend credence, for some reason; like the pretty idea that to be good is to be happy. She, for example, was quite good, technically speaking; but she had never been at all happy. Whereas Suzanne was always happy, and yet— The girl shrugged a cynical shoulder, and gave her stepmother the benefit of the doubt.

Thrills of the sort women discuss so freely nowadays she was quite familiar with; the thrill of the chase, of being chased; the thrill of uncertainty, not quite sure whether you could handle your man or not—far more exciting than, though on the same order as, the thrill of handling a lively horse. But this queer weakness, the melting sensation behind the eyeballs when you looked at each other, this absurd feeling that somebody was of more importance to you than yourself—an hour or two since, Emily could not have conceived the sensation of finding anybody more important to her than herself. Yet here she was dreading her final parting

with this new lover, not so much for her sake as for his; she feared to hurt him. Curious!

She let Esteban down easily when the time came, promising to meet him on the point of pines as soon as it was dark enough.

Her stepmother did not appear to have missed her particularly. "You've been gone ages, dear," she said, glancing up from her novel. "Swimming again? Such a blessing to have skin that doesn't burn! I should have worried about you horribly, except that Duval fortunately discovered you through his field glass, out on the rocks with a strange young man. Quite a beauty, too, he said. Who was it, darling?"

"Really, I don't know," replied Emily indifferently; but her face flushed.

"Eh? You don't know?" Suzanne put down her book, interested more in the blush than in the stranger; she had not often see Emily blush. "Yet Duval reported that you seemed to be on very friendly terms with him. What chances girls do take nowadays! Before I was married, I wouldn't have dreamed of going swimming with a man I did not know, especially in a one-piece bathing suit without stockings!" She added a bit of maternal counsel: "Always remember to sit on the far side of the rocks, darling. This place simply bristles with field glasses."

Emily, of course, had no intention of going to the point of pines as soon as it was dark. That episode was over. She was not so much ashamed of it

as alarmed by it. Was her little brain-storm a symptom? Could it be possible that she was getting susceptible as age crept up on her, like Suzanne? Inclined to what she called sloppiness? A Basque fisherman! Why, it was worse than a hotel director!

She invited herself to spend the night with an English spinster she knew, living over in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, who had fallen in love, as plain old women often did, with Emily's cool young beauty. Miss Dibbs should be an antidote for Esteban.

But she was not. Miss Dibbs was specializing, in her mild artist fashion, on things Basque, collecting *cruches, ferratas, makhilas,* gay Basque linens. She talked constantly of her hobby. Emily, all night long, could not lose the thought of Esteban—Esteban taking her in his arms, Esteban waiting for her under the dark pines. She tossed about feverishly in Miss Dibbs' spinsterly verbena-scented sheets and listened to a *basauflûte* played by some native lover down among the mimosas. "Cool young beauty," indeed!

Her hostess was delighted with Emily's new interest in what she called "Basquerie"; took her to see an ancient church with its little ancient ship suspended from the roof in memory of some sea disaster; its triple galleries, where the men sat in tiers so as not to distract the attention of their women, who knelt below on the black praying rugs—seafaring folk having special need of the prayers of their women. She drove Emily to a graveyard to see certain inscriptions she had found on the discoid

crosses there; sun symbols, moon and stars, jagged streaks to represent lightning.

"You see, they've not been Christians long, poor dears. Only a matter of a few centuries," she explained.

But they could not, after all, inspect the gravestones, because some men were playing *pelota* there.

"Isn't it quaint of them to use their church wall as a *frontón* to bounce the eternal ball against?" smiled Miss Dibbs indulgently.

Emily's attention was caught by one player, a splendidly built young man in white flannels confined by the usual broad red sash, whose muscles rippled under the skin like those of a young tiger, and who caught and returned the ball from the scoop-shaped wicker *chistera* on his arm with the speed and precision of a machine. Did all Basques, she wondered, look alike, or was it that she could not get Esteban out of her mind? As if drawn by her gaze, he turned toward her.

"Why," exclaimed Miss Dibbs, who had her British interest in all manly sports, "if it isn't the champion, the man who has been winning all the *pelota* tournaments this summer! Yes, yes, it's Urruty himself!"

It was also Esteban; and after a long unsmiling gaze at Emily, he turned quietly back to his game.

That made it a little better, she told herself ironically; he was an athlete then, as well as a sailor, carpenter, what not. It was almost like one's school-days—being smitten with the charms of a baseball

hero, who delivered the groceries in odd moments. Her lip curled in self-scorn.

After it was dark that night, she went out alone onto the point of pines. Not that she expected to find Esteban; doubtless he had learned his lesson. The moon had not yet risen; it was dark under the trees, and quite deserted. Emily wondered where the natives did their courting out of season. She was, nevertheless, not surprised to hear his voice from the near darkness: "I have been waiting, mademoiselle."

"Waiting? When I failed you before?" she rallied him.

"I knew that you would fail the first time. Love is terrifying when it comes like this."

"You speak," she said lightly, "as if you have had a good deal of experience, my friend."

"I am a man," was the simple reply. "But to a young girl it is even more terrifying, naturally. I was well content. All night I played to you, there under the mimosa. You heard my *basauflûte?*"

"Unfortunately, no!" Emily laughed a little. "I was not at home, Esteban. I had run away."

"Nevertheless, you heard me," he said mysteriously, and smiled. "Ah, mademoiselle, do you not know that if you do not come to me, I must come to you, always?"

It was a curious thing to have happened to Emily Weldon, of all people; Emily, who prided herself on a steady head; who knew to a hairbreadth the limit of the danger line; who had an instinct for the

moment a look must be turned into a laugh, the moment champagne ceases to exhilarate and begins to relax. She had never been of those who are more kissed against than kissing, as the phrase goes; an untrammeled young modernist, she would have been ashamed not to bear her full share of anything that happened to be going. But her kisses had been experimental rather than symptomatic; she employed them as scientists employ their test tubes, very accurately.

Now her hand seemed to have lost its cunning. She, the manipulator of emotions, was being manipulated by them; she abandoned herself to this impossible affair with a native *pelota* player as if her father had never given her the benefit of dying counsels. True, there was no ball about at the moment to keep an eye upon.

She was with Esteban at all hours of the day and night; swam with him at dawn, spent hours out on the rocks with him—on the far side—watched the moon rise and set with him down on the beach of the lower town, where there were only native eyes to see. What, she thought sometimes angrily, was her stepmother thinking about to ask no questions? But Suzanne was probably grateful enough for liberty of her own; the girl had not the heart just then to be too severe with her in the matter of Monsieur Duval. Emily had, as usual, nobody to take care of her but herself.

And Esteban. The simple fellow's passion for

her amounted to adoration; never in her experience had she been wooed with such intensity of fervor—the "fiery Basque," indeed! Yet no discreet man of the world could have shown more restraint, more delicacy in his wooing. It baffled and rather annoyed her. Since she had chosen thus to fling her slipper over the hedge, who was he to decline to pick it up?

"Esteban"—she was lying in his arms out on the rocks, with only the wide Atlantic before them—"why is it you are always so—so careful of me, as if I were something fragile? I'm not! Why do you never kiss me—enough?"

"It would not be possible to kiss you enough," he said under his breath, in a tone that thrilled her. "But do you not know," he added more calmly, "that with Basques, as with Americans, women are sacred?"

"You flatter my countrymen," she murmured. "Even if they'd rather not be sacred, Esteban? If they'd rather just be loved?"

"With us, it is the same thing." He repeated a legend current among his people: The Romans, in pagan days, had twitted the Basques with having only one god to worship. "It is true we have but one god," they admitted, "but we have many goddesses."

"Who are they?" asked the Romans.

"Our wives," replied the Basques.

For the first time Emily realized—realized with a pang that was part anger and part pain—that this absurd, adorable creature expected to marry her. Marry "the beautiful Miss Weldon," as the fashion

sheets called her; she who had almost been the Princess Abdul, who might yet become, with luck, the second Lady Congers.

She urged her stepmother that night to come away from Biarritz; but Suzanne, usually of so yielding a nature, was quite firm. "You see," she explained, "it really is a matter of economy, darling. The *moustiques* aren't too bad yet, and we're practically guests of the house. Now don't get on your high horse about it! Why shouldn't we be? We've been good patrons, the hotel is practically empty, and they like to have people of our sort about; it gives tone. Besides," she added innocently, "it isn't as if we were any personal expense to Monsieur Duval, you know."

Suzanne really was a remarkable manager; what she accomplished in the way of concessions, commissions from tradespeople and the like, was quite miraculous; also mysterious.

Emily gave her little mental shrug. After all, this was Suzanne's affair; she could hardly be expected to look a gift horse in the mouth.

In the end it was Esteban who decided to leave Biarritz; announced his intention quite suddenly, as they sat together in their favorite trysting place. "Tomorrow, my heart, I must go home," he said.

"Home! But I thought you lived here?"

"In the town? Ah, no, I shall never live in a town. My home is not far away, in the hills. My grandmother wants me now."

"Your grandmother!" She laughed and drew his

lips down to hers. "Does your grandmother want you, do you think, as much as I do?"

"It is for the haying," he explained. "And after that comes the irrigation of the fields. Then there are some young mares to be taken at this season to the *haras*. Yes, I am needed. Also"—he exploded his bomb quietly—"my grandmother wishes to see you."

"Me?" She sat upright in his arms.

"Yes. I have written to her and to my father that I have found you at last. They are glad. It is time I should have sons. I am, since my brother's death, the heir of our *etcheonda*."

"You mean," gasped Emily, "that you are expecting to take me with you as your wife?"

"Oh, no. First they must see you; I must have my grandmother's consent. She is the head of our house." He spoke as if it were the house of princes.

The girl crowed with laughter. "This is delicious! You want to take me home with you on approval?"

"Yes," he said simply, and kissed her.

She sobered; an idea had come to her. Why not go with him, add a few days more to the idyl, away from prying eyes, away from the world—her world, with its artificial restraints? She had given him so much; if she could give him more, a little time of happiness to remember always, it might lessen the hurt, afterward. It was not of herself she thought now, only of him; it had come to that. Marriage between them was, of course, not possible; but there

was one sacrifice she could make on the altar of this her only love—herself; if necessary, her good name. She felt for the first time her woman's need of giving, and she had nothing else to give.

She thought rapidly. She could pretend she was going over to stay with her friend Miss Dibbs. She would see his home, his people—they had become of peculiar interest to her. She would be very sweet to them, and to Esteban. Then, having made him quite happy, she would go quietly away to her own life, as he was now going back to his. Happiness, observation had taught her, was not a thing that lasts in any case. Theirs would be shorter than most, perhaps, but at least they would have had something. She put her hand in his.

"How do we get there, Esteban? By train? By diligence?" she asked.

No, no, such ways were good enough for Basquaises. "When an American lady travels," he cried, "she travels in style!" His eyes sparkled with triumph; he was happy as a child over her consent. His plans, he confessed, were already laid. They would travel by automobile.

"But," demurred Emily with unwonted consideration—she was not accustomed to poor lovers—"I'm afraid you will find it very expensive to take an automobile, dear."

He smiled tenderly. What a good little housewife it would be! But for once they could afford to be expensive, he said. "We are not too poor, we

Urruty." She had been tactless; she should have remembered his good peasant pride.

"And your grandmother—she will not be shocked by my making this journey with you, alone?"

"Shocked?" He stared a little, then smiled, again. "It is not a long journey by automobile—barely a day. And my grandmother is not so easily shocked; she is not *mondaine*."

Emily felt rather foolish. Naturally, in this class there would be few conventions.

That night she asked some casual questions of Monsieur Duval, whose business it was to know as much as possible about everybody. Could he tell her something of a family named Urruty, in that neighborhood? What sort of people they were? How they lived?

The director gave her a shrewd little glance, which she noticed. Doubtless he had seen her with Esteban; but what of that?

"Urruty? It is a Basque name, not uncommon hereabouts. Living in the *Basses-Pyrénées*, you say? In that case they would be farmers, herdsmen. All Basques are farmers, mademoiselle; unless they are fishermen, sailors, smugglers; or shopkeepers, perhaps, or laborers—"

"That is to say that they are working people," she interrupted impatiently—she never troubled herself to be too polite to this gentleman, which was a mistake. "There is no sort of aristocracy among them?"

He shrugged ironically. "In the American sense,

no. All Basques are noble. They were ennobled as a nation some centuries ago, for services against the Saracens in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. But," he murmured, slightly smiling, "it is not an effete nobility. As mademoiselle suggests, it is not too proud to sweat."

II

As their panting car wound up and up the Route des Pyrénées, leaving behind the blue curve of the Atlantic, edged with its dazzling red-roofed houses, Emily began to feel the dreamy exhilaration which comes so often in high places. It was as if the day, all gold and green and fragrant with sea and snow, had just been washed for them and hung out to dry in the sun.

"Like the clothes of the Infant Jesus," Esteban assented to her fancy, "which the Virgin Mary washes always on Saturday. That is why there is always sun on Saturday—or so say our Catholic neighbors, the Catalans."

"Basques are not Catholic then?" she asked.

"Not always. Some of us have been Huguenot. Basques are adaptable; or I should not dare be taking to my home a wife who is—of what faith, mademoiselle?"

Emily shrugged. "Beauty worship, I think. In cities I go to the handsomest cathedral. I, too, am adaptable, you see."

He turned a serious, questioning look upon her.

"Do you mean that, if I were to ask, you would be willing to become Catholic?"

"Perhaps," she said, "if you were to ask— Anything, Esteban!"

He was deeply moved; his hand closed over hers. "Ah, mademoiselle, you make me proud, and humble."

"Too humble," she exclaimed impatiently. "Why do you still call me mademoiselle? Surely you are no longer afraid of me?"

He did not answer for a moment. Then he said very low, "Of you, no. It is for our happiness I have fear. It is too much."

The girl thrilled. This man, she realized, would be hard to get away from.

Their progress was impeded sometimes by odd vehicles: a two-wheeled cart like an ancient Roman chariot, drawn by white oxen with pads of fleece on their heads and fringe across their eyes; heavy-laden *carros* with five or six mules driven tandem; a top-heavy three-storied diligence, women seated below, behind curtains of red-checked calico, men on the banquette above, without curtains, and a curious assortment of luggage on top. The horses shied from their noisy engine to the very edge of a precipice. There was a moment of great danger; but the women did not scream, the men were silent. Only the driver muttered to his leaping horses, "Hari, Pompon! Grisette!" and went stolidly on.

Sometimes they passed men on foot, moving along easily mile after mile in their light canvas *espadrilles*,

wearing hooded capes, carrying over the shoulder a two-ended bag, or *bursac*, sometimes with a big blue cotton umbrella, and always the *makhila*, a sort of alpenstock with a knife screwed inside for defense against the fierce dogs and the fiercer wild pigs of the Pyrenees.

Now and again their laboring engine had to be refreshed with water; an easy matter, since every few yards a cataract came tumbling down the mountain and added itself to the stream that flowed beside the road. Emily was reminded that they were crossing one of the world's great watersheds.

Esteban's naïve pride in his rented car's performance amused the girl, accustomed, in lack of other evidence, to select her admirers according to the make of automobile they drove. "It is no longer young," he commented, "but vigorous, like my father, who, with but one arm, has managed to marry himself a plump young wife and can still plow his field in a day."

Emily frivolously suggested that their engine sounded as if it, too, could plow its field in a day.

"Yes, it is a fine car," he assented in all seriousness. "Mademoiselle, I suppose, has not often driven in such a car as this?"

"Indeed, no," she confessed with truth, careful not to smile at his simplicity. But stealing a glance at him, she saw that he himself was smiling quietly. They laughed together. Perhaps he was not so simple as she thought.

Presently they came to higher, lonelier places,

where they passed no vehicles at all, only now and then great pink-white cattle that lumbered across the road under the clever, anxious direction of shaggy dogs of the same color. There was everywhere a faint, blowing sound of bells and of rushing water. Far below, the little fields made a patchwork quilt of the valley, with here and there a village flatly embroidered, or a church steeple. A tiny wisp of fleece detached itself from the nearest peak and drifted toward them. The sun disappeared; a curious opaque light was around them, as if they had penetrated the heart of a moonstone. Looking down, Emily saw that the valley was no longer visible. They were above a cloud.

She shivered a little. "No, I am not cold," she told Esteban. "But I feel as if that cloud had come between me and any world I know—blotted it out completely. It is my turn," she said a little wanly, "to feel rather frightened."

He stopped the car and got out for her a hooded cape such as the peasants they passed had worn. It was so heavy she could hardly lift it.

"My grandmother had it made on the place out of the wool of our own black sheep, and sent it to me in your New York for fear I should be cold there."

New York—the name seemed strange to her. She had a momentary vision of Esteban stalking along Fifth Avenue with his shepherd's cape and *bursac* and *makhila*, attracting from the crowds as they passed no more attention than they gave the great

blond Swede who used to exercise along Fifth Avenue on winter days in white flannels, hatless, his blouse open at the throat. The memory of those hurrying, indifferent crowds frightened her far more than the realization that she was alone, high above civilization, lost in the mountain peaks with a man who loved her. It would take more than a shepherd's cape to keep one warm in New York.

"Will mademoiselle have a bouquet?" Esteban suggested, smiling.

She saw that though they had passed the timber line, the bleak slope was covered with millions of little flowers—bluebells, buttercups, gentian, exquisite rare ferns.

"They say it is the blood of Roland that brings so many flowers here," he told her.

"What—our Roland? 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came—' "

"Our Roland, too," he reminded her. "It was here at Roncesvalles that he blew upon the great horn and died. Our children know him well—my little stepbrother had once a tin sword and a hobby-horse, called Durandel and Veillantif, after the sword and horse of Roland; and even now his sheep dog is named Olivier for Roland's friend. We do not forget easily, we Basques! They call our country 'the land where time delays.' "

She repeated it after him rather wistfully—"The land where time delays."

"And it was here also," he added, "that my brother died."

"You mean during the war?"

"No, he was caught smuggling. Our grandmother was so angry with him that she would not look upon his dead face."

Emily asked sympathetically, "Because she felt the—disgrace of it?"

His eyebrows lifted. "There was no disgrace. With us, smuggling is a matter of principle—there should be no tax on necessities between Basques of Spain and Basques of France. It is not a just tax; therefore we ignore it. We would never, of course, bribe a guard, nor attack him; and my brother, who was of a very sensitive honor, felt that he should not even defend himself from a guard, since the man was but doing his duty. So it was that he happened to be killed. But our grandmother was very angry. She felt that he should first have remembered his duty to the *etcheonda*, as oldest son of an oldest son; he who had been trained for the land, as I was not."

"But why is your father not the heir himself, then?"

"His second marriage has displeased my grandmother," said Esteban. "He took a wife from Béarn, where the women are fat and lazy—lowland folk. She is not fitted to succeed my grandmother. The head of a house, with us, appoints the heir," he explained, "and his wife becomes in time the head of the house. You," he added softly, "will, if I outlive my grandmother, become in time the head of our house." His eyes shone at the thought.

A qualm of compunction touched Emily; also a growing dread of the old Spartan matriarch who took her family inheritance so seriously.

"How do you know that I shall please your grandmother any better than the lazy Béarnaise?" she murmured.

"It is not possible," he said with quiet conviction, "that you could fail to please her."

She kissed him for that. He put her away suddenly, however, as if he were listening. "There—do you hear?"

It was a faint little airy music coming down from above them, together with a tinkle of sheep bells; a thin elfin sound, infinitely lonely, breathing of sun and wind and peace. It seemed the very voice of the Pyrenees.

"A bird?" she whispered.

He shook his head. "It is my little brother, who plays the *chirilion* to amuse his sheep and to keep himself from fear of spirits." He smiled. "Our high pastures are near La Rhune"—he indicated the tallest of the black peaks—"which is the abode of the devil, and Ignacio is timid for his years. My father's wife spoils him; she did not even wish that he should take his year with the sheep."

He explained their custom of sending a boy, when he was twelve, to guard the flocks in the high pastures for a season, quite alone, in order to make of him a man.

"A man at twelve years!" exclaimed Emily pityingly.

"A man at birth, if he is Basque," was the calm reply. "But he must learn to know it."

After all, it was no worse than the English custom of sending even younger lads away to the brutality of the public schools.

"I don't blame your father's wife," said Emily. "Did you too have your time alone with the sheep, poor little Esteban?"

"Naturally. It was a very good time. That was when I came to enjoy books. I have brought some books to Ignacio."

He cupped his hands about his mouth and shouted, "Nacio! Nacio!" The echoes came back to them, rebounding from cliff to cliff, faintly and more faint —Nacio-o-o, Nacio-o-o. He put two fingers into his mouth and whistled, sharp and shrill.

Presently they saw movement far above, near the snow line. Sheep appeared; then a dog, bounding eagerly; then a boy's thin little figure descending toward them in great leaps, using his *makhila* as a vaulting pole, hurling himself recklessly down the rock-strewn slope.

"Hi, Olivier—*sois sage, mon cher!*" laughed Esteban, putting down the great dog that leaped upon him, whining with joy; while the grinning, eager lad, seeing Emily, stopped short, shy as one of his own sheep, ready to run away.

Esteban caught him in both arms and they kissed on either cheek. It touched Emily to see such obviously male creatures so unashamed of their affection.

Then he led the boy to her, murmuring something in Basque.

"*B'jou', madame,*" Nacio muttered, in an agony of bashfulness. Esteban, laughing, whispered again. "I mean—ma'm'selle!" groaned the boy; and then Emily, to put him out of his misery, bent and kissed him herself.

"I—give you welcome—*belle-sœur!*" he gasped unprompted, and turned and fled. Esteban had to run after him to give him the books and a box of sweets he had brought.

They left him halfway up the mountain, near his sheep, staring after them wistfully, the dog beside him staring, too, waving a bushy tail in farewell.

"Nacio will not have to play his *chirilion* tonight," said his brother. "He will be too happy."

"With that great box of chocolates?"

"With the memory of his kiss," said Esteban. "We Basques know how to remember. Ah, Emilie —Emilie!" He did not call her mademoiselle again.

They lunched deliciously, upon the terrace of a crude little inn down the next valley, on trout caught before their eyes, wild mountain strawberries and soured cream; with the golden wine of Jurançon, in which they had bathed the little Henry of Navarre at birth to make him strong. He, too, seemed a familiar hero of the day.

Afterward, to make more palatable the thick Spanish coffee, Esteban ordered her a little glass of that liqueur compounded of flowers and fire which Basques called Yzarra. The patronne of the inn,

a thickset peasant woman, shared this with them, speaking to Esteban by name, staring anxiously and inimically at Emily.

"She doesn't seem to like me," murmured Emily in English.

"She is not accustomed to Americans of your sort," he explained. "Only to the kind who rush past in motor lorries, staring and laughing and pointing with the finger as if one were not there. My people love their privacy. That is why strangers are never able to learn the Euskara."

She began to dread the meeting with Esteban's family. It would have been pleasant to linger at this humble, clean little place; to go no farther. Why should they hurry? After all, it was not to see his grandmother that she had come with Esteban.

She caught at his hand, as he was rising to get the car. "Must we?" she whispered. "Can't we stay here awhile?"

"There is still a long way to go over these winding roads, and the night comes early here in the valleys."

"What of that? What," she murmured, "if it should overtake us here?" Languor was gaining upon her, a dreamy content. Nothing mattered but to be with him, away from yesterdays and tomorrows. It was so, she thought, that a happy bride must feel—a bride who had married for love.

But he rallied her in great amusement. "Who is the shy one now? You do not wish to see my

home, then? You would like to turn and run away, like Nacio?"

She pulled him down to murmur against his lips, "I want nothing but you—you! To have you hold me in your arms, keep me—"

He laughed tenderly. "I should not have given you the Yzarra," he observed. "It is a man's drink, too fiery for little unaccustomed heads of girls."

She pushed him away and jumped to her feet, very angry. Was he too simple to understand—or did he prefer not to understand? Had he the impertinence to try to teach her, Emily Weldon, a lesson?

She did not speak to him again for some time; but apparently he failed to notice her silence. As they neared his home his spirits soared higher and higher; he began to sing, half under his breath, those melancholy little songs with which primitive peoples express joy. Sometimes the words were unintelligible, but when they were in French, Emily was constrained to listen. One was about a bird which pined in the cage until it was released, and then pined for the cage again. Another was about a valley, such as the deep and narrow *gave* they were traversing, down which stream and road hurried together toward the distant plains and the cities:

"The valley of Andoce, oh, the long valley,
Three times it has broken my heart—"

sang Esteban; and added soberly, "That is a song

for my grandmother. Three times it has broken her heart, indeed, this valley—once when all her sons and grandsons together marched down it to the war, from which only three returned; once when they brought her the body of my brother, which she was too angry to look at—but she has never laughed since; and once when they carried down to the churchyard my own little mother, whom she loved better than any child of her own, because she was small and delicate and rare, like you. But now," he said—"now joy is coming to her up 'the long valley'!"

Again compunction smote the girl. They were going too fast for her, these few hours together. She forgot to be angry with him, made him stop the car now and again so that they might listen awhile to the cow-bells and sheep bells, to the Angelus from a steeple far below. How simple life was for these people, how pure and clean! A song of her own land ran through her head, in fragments:

"Watching the white mist stealing
O'er valley and mead and town, . . .
Like children with violets playing—"

Had she ever been a child playing with violets? She began to weep a little—why, she did not know. It could hardly be an exciting pastime, playing with violets.

Esteban kissed the tears away as they fell, asking

no questions. Perhaps he attributed them to the Yzarra.

The shadows were purpling when they came in sight of Esteban's home, from below—a large timbered farmhouse of orange-toned plaster, stained with great age, a queer little turret at one corner, the inevitable high balcony facing the east—a remnant of the old sun worship. Above the arched doorway she made out a sort of defaced escutcheon.

"Why, Esteban, is it a coat of arms?"

He explained that every family which had provided an alcalde was entitled to such an escutcheon over the doorway; but that the alcalde might be the village blacksmith, the tailor, any man whom his neighbors elected at the yearly *junta* as suitable to fill the position.

"We have had several alcaldes from our house—my father is alcalde now." He added carelessly, "It is a nuisance for a busy man, but one does not refuse."

There was a woman's figure visible in the arch of the doorway.

"That will be Stancia, my brother's widow," remarked Esteban. "She always watches for me. I should tell you that there has been thought among the elders of our marrying. She is good with the ménage, a great help to my grandmother. It would be a pity for her to marry away from our family. But that, I believe, she will never do."

"Why not?" demanded Emily with a sudden stab of jealousy. "Because she is in love with you?"

"I think so," he replied simply. "And she has

tempted me—it is always tempting to be loved. But it seems more suitable that she remain true to my brother's memory."

The sentiment, thought Emily, was creditable, but a little hard on Stancia. Was the suttee idea a remnant of their Eastern origin?

"Esteban," she asked suddenly, "have many women—tempted you?"

He shrugged. "Oh, yes; there are many strong, handsome girls here in our valleys. The Spanish are very beautiful, as you know; and in France—what a look they have out of the eye! Up alone with the sheep or out on the ocean, a man has time to think of women. But—you take them in your arms, and what is there but the dream? You kiss them on the painted red lips, and even the dream is gone. One like another."

"But me, my dear? What did you find in me?" This was a new Esteban, here against his own background—rather a startling one.

He turned and looked at her tenderly. "A need," he said; "a need of help—little white butterfly buffeting the wind with its wings."

His insight chagrined her—she who had thought herself condescending to his simplicity! She caught at his arm. "It's true, Esteban. I do need help. I'm so tired of—buffeting the wind. Oh, hold me! Try to hold me if you can."

His hand closed over hers. "I shall hold you," he promised.

As they neared the house, he in turn asked a ques-

tion—his first, yet it showed her that he knew far more of her affairs than she of his.

"That lady whom you sometimes call 'mamma' was the *wife* of your father?"

"Of course!" Emily flushed a little. He had put it oddly.

"And before that she was married to another man—who still lives?"

"Yes"—fortunately enough, Emily thought, since that gentleman's generous alimony formed a large part of their income.

"We shall not speak of this to my grandmother," he suggested quietly. "In all respects, Basques are not adaptable. There is no word in our language," he added with his terrible simplicity, "for adultery."

They had reached the doorway, from which a young woman in a black mantilla stepped out to them. "You are late, Esteban. La madre has been long expecting you," she said in a tone of reproof; but how her eyes smoldered as she looked at him! She turned to Emily with the light dying out, and said politely, "Enter, mademoiselle. You are welcome."

That night, alone in an enormous room with a high square bed in each of the four corners—fortunately there happened to be no other guests to share the Urruty hospitality at the moment—Emily tried to fix the impressions of the day on her memory. There was a curious mixture in her mind of peace with perturbation, strangeness with a blessed familiarity, as if she had come home—she who knew no home;

as if this ancient hacienda in the hills, shelter to many generations of a people utterly foreign to her, were her shelter too, her stem house. Perhaps—and the thought thrilled while it startled her—it meant that this home of Esteban's was to be the home of Urruty yet to come who would be her children, her children's children.

She shook the thought away, tried to wake from it as from a nightmare. What was she dreaming of?—she, Emily Weldon, marrying into a family of peasants! Even Esteban, with his promise to hold her—or was it a threat?—could not make her commit such a folly as that.

The *etcheonda* in which he took such pride had been disappointing on closer inspection. Picturesque, yes; but primitive to an appalling degree. The fine arch of the entrance led into nothing more than a cobbled runway to the stable yard beyond, where manure was more than evident. There were horses stabled in the house itself, beneath the room where she lay. Opposite the stalls, they had entered a sort of hall or entrance chamber of great size, but without furniture. Farm implements and harness seemed to be stored there. Inside the door she had noticed a long row of high-peaked wooden sabots, like those worn by Stancia, who added her own to the rest.

"Here our people thresh grain and hold the harvest feasts," Esteban told her. "A fine floor for the dance, eh, Stancia?" He put an affectionate arm about his sister-in-law, from which the young widow

visibly shrank. "You should see this Stancia in the *farandole!* She used to be the prettiest dancer in the valleys. Ah, but you shall see her—at our wedding." He seemed unconscious of cruelty, in his boyish happiness to have brought the woman he loved into the home he loved.

From this bleak hall a flight of worn stone stairs led to chambers above, where Emily glimpsed something of the treasures often hidden in these old hill homes of a seafaring, pirate people. Tall *armoires*, rich with dim gold and red and blue; great carved chests, chairs of stamped Spanish leather, faded arras and soft-toned thread-bare velvets against the plastered wall; intermingled with highly colored modern lithographs of saints and martyrs.

But Stancia, giving her barely time to make herself neat, hurried her down to the supper table.

"*La madre* is waiting," she said, as if it were sufficient explanation of any haste.

The room into which Emily was led appeared to be a kitchen, a stone-flagged chamber of great size, with two large chimneys, in one of which she noted the anachronism of a modern iron cookstove. Vessels of brass and copper gleamed fitfully, festoons of dried peppers and garlic hung from the beams, a long narrow table was covered at one end with a red damask cloth, and about it people sat eating.

But to Emily everything in the room was dwarfed in interest by the woman at the head of the table—not a large figure, but one of great dignity: white hair brushed straight up from a dark wrinkled face

more Oriental than Spanish in type, with the flat features, high cheek bones and serene immobility of an ancient Buddha. Only the eyes were not old. They flashed with interest, vitality, surprising youth. Without rising, she motioned Emily courteously to a seat at her right hand, beside Esteban, who stood awaiting her.

Opposite, his father also stood waiting, a soldierly looking man with an empty sleeve pinned across his blouse, who bowed stiffly but with a shy quick smile for her, like Esteban's. This was Pedro Urruty, who bore apparently no ill will to the mother who had deposed him in favor of his son as heir. Beside him sat the fat young wife from Béarn; and there were several children, all girls. At the far end of the table, beyond the damask cloth, were other men and women, who made no attempt to rise or to greet her, merely stared and swallowed and stared again. These were evidently farm laborers. There was no service of any sort. People helped themselves at will out of dishes on the table. Now and then the daughter-in-law, Stancia, apparently the cook, replenished these with food hot from the stove.

It was a strangely patriarchal scene, impressive in its simplicity. Emily felt as if she had stepped into the pages of the Old Testament. They spoke little to one another, and to her not at all; yet she felt no embarrassment, since they seemed to feel none. The business of the moment was obviously to eat. At the end of the meal, Stancia handed the matriarch a large vessel of pewter shaped like the pottery water

cruches to be found anywhere in the South of France, with a handle and a spout.

"It is the *pourru.* They drink the *régalade* in our honor!" whispered Esteban to Emily, evidently much pleased. It passed from hand to hand down the table. Each drinker lifted the vessel above his head and inclined it so that the liquid streamed into his mouth, without touching the spout with the lips. Emily gathered that this was a point of etiquette rather than of sanitation, and was able by the time the *pourru* came to her hands to drink in the same manner, without spilling a drop. For the first time the old woman smiled.

"This girl is quick. We shall make of her a good little Basquaise!" she remarked to Esteban; but she spoke in French, and Emily was evidently expected to hear.

Then Pedro Urruty made a sign, and suddenly every man at the table sprang to his feet with a high wild shout, as startling as a Confederate rebel yell or a Highland clan call.

"It is the *irrezina,* our battle cry," explained Esteban, his eyes shining. "These men have fought with us." He put his hand up in a brief military salute of acknowledgment.

Emily was oddly moved by the little ceremony. So might a young lord of feudal days have been greeted by his vassals. She did not mind the frank category of questioning that followed; it seemed quite in keeping.

What, inquired the old woman briefly, was the

amount of her dot? Mr. Weldon, who knew his Europe, had fortunately been able to lay aside a modest sum for this purpose, which the amiable generosity of Suzanne had left so far unimpaired. Emily mentioned it.

"It should buy you those meadows from the Etcheverray," remarked the old woman casually to her grandson. And mademoiselle was orphaned? In that case, who was empowered to arrange her marriage?

Emily explained that in America young women sometimes performed this service for themselves. The matriarch glanced at Esteban for corroboration. He nodded. *"C'est l'habitude, ma mère."*

The Americans, remarked Madame Urruty, were still *un peu sauvage*, then? However, one had heard they were a virtuous people. And mademoiselle's religious faith?

She seemed very little disturbed when Emily admitted that she had none in particular.

"Eh, well, these things arrange themselves," she commented indifferently. "That is an affair of the priests. A loving and obedient young wife—there should be little difficulty." She shrugged. Perhaps Esteban had already hinted that his financée might prove adaptable.

Then, somewhat to Emily's dismay, the old woman had come to her and kissed her, ceremoniously but very kindly, on each cheek. Pedro Urruty did likewise, followed by everyone at the table except the farm servants, who continued to stare and mas-

ticate. And so Emily, the beautiful Miss Weldon of the fashion sheets, found herself accepted as the affianced bride of a Basque hill farmer, shut off behind the Pyrenees from the far-away, vague, unreal world she had left only that morning.

She lay there listening, quivering to the thought that she was at last under the same roof with her lover. Through open windows, a breath of the near-by snow fields stirred the heavy woolen curtains of the bed, mingled with a delicious fragrance from the beehives in the courtyard. Esteban had shown them to her, gay little houses painted in colors like flowers, his grandmother's pride.

"There are no such bees as the bees of our valley," he said. "*La madre's* hydromel is famous throughout the Basses-Pyrénées. You do not know hydromel? It is the honey wine; in England they call it mead."

She was aware, lying there, of many unaccustomed sounds; always the faint, far tinkle of herd bells, the whisper of rushing water; below her, in their stalls, the munching and moving of drowsy beasts. Presently voices from the next room became audible in the stillness—high voices of little girls, with now and then a deeper note. Apparently the family of Pedro Urruty were talking her over from their beds, chiefly in French for the benefit of the Béarnaise mother, though there were phrases of Spanish and Basque also—the household seemed to be trilingual.

"But how white, *maman*, how white her skin!

And such little, little feet, like a princess. Silk stockings on them—"

"And silk lingerie also; I have seen it when she crossed the knees."

"But certainly, that was easy," mocked an older voice. "Crossing the knees! Fine behavior for your princess, hein? Such a useful wife she will make in the house! Not only the feet are ridiculous but the whole person. What breasts, what hips! *Il n'y a rien du tout.* Esteban would have done better to take Stancia, who is mad for him. Do you notice, my Pedro, how she could not keep from touching him at the table, the poor girl? What sort of children will this one bear him, I ask you—pygmies?"

"Would you have her bear him—pigs?" It was the masculine murmur of Esteban's father to the rescue. "True, there is less of her than of yourself, my angel, which is to be regretted; but, in the end, it is livestock we select for the weight, rather than wives."

Emily smiled into her pillow. Evidently she had a strong ally in the elder Urruty. But, of course, the woman was right. What was she doing in such a place? There must be only another day of it.

She sighed, and fell asleep at last; to be startled half awake by a hand trying her door, softly opening it. So her lover had been dreaming of her then, as she of him—needing her!

"Esteban! You have come?" she whispered into the darkness.

A woman's voice replied dryly, "No, it is not Esteban. I bring the little *déjeuner*. *La madre* suggests that if mademoiselle would dress quickly—We go to the mass early, since there is still hay to be stacked."

III

Chagrined and resentful, Emily sipped the thick hot chocolate Stancia had brought her, spiced with cinnamon, and nibbled at a sweet cake which she wished had been a roll. Mass, at such an hour—or at any hour, for that matter!

It was broad daylight when she was wakened at last by four eyes gazing fixedly at her, two belonging to a large dog and two to a very small girl.

"Myself, I am Bette," said the little girl, when she was sure of complete attention, "and this one is Nagarro. We have been left to guard you. We are doing so."

The rest of the household, it appeared, had gone to mass. She, being of a responsible nature, had been given the position of trust.

"But Esteban?" asked Emily. "Where is he?"

"Also at mass. *La madre* wished for his company."

Emily began to be thoroughly out of patience with this matriarchate. To be left, on her last day with Esteban, to the company of a child!

The glamour of her adventure suddenly palled. An idea came to her of getting away without the

necessity of farewells. She would take the automobile that had brought them, and leave before the household returned—unless Esteban had already taken it.

But no, the responsible Bette assured her, it waited under a shed, hidden away from the brood mares, which must not be frightened at this season. She, Bette, had no such matronly fears; in fact, Esteban had promised to drive her in the automobile, if she succeeded in keeping mademoiselle well amused during his absence. Therefore she had prepared quite a program of entertainment. First, they would inspect the poultry yard, her especial charge; then by natural progression the pigsties and the dovecot; next the dairy, and the looms where the winter's cloth was weaving. Was mademoiselle a friend of bees? Otherwise they might resent intrusion. Mademoiselle was not? A pity! But at least she should see the children who had been born to Gathid recently under the brew house.

"Who," asked Emily, "is Gathid?"

"Gathid? But she is as always the house-cat, mademoiselle! And surely of an age to know better. However, if they were kept a secret, *la madre* would not be able to have her children drowned as usual in the water butt. Cats were, of course, creatures of the devil; and *la madre* felt that one Gathid was sufficient to represent the devil in any household.

Here, thought Emily, was a people who took no chances—they went to mass, but they managed to keep also on neighborly terms with the devil. On

further consideration she decided to remain and see what Bette had to offer. She had never known any children except of the unnatural hotel variety; and there was something about this little future matriarch that caught her fancy, reminded her disarmingly of Esteban, in a smaller and fatter manifestation.

She was almost sorry when they saw the household returning from mass; quite a cavalcade, the men riding mule or horses, the women in a large white-hooded *tartane*, all except the matriarch, a stately old figure in her voluminous black cape and thimble-shaped hat, who rode a tall, spirited horse, mounted sidewise on a Spanish saddle with a shelf for the feet. The other women had black scarfs over their heads, and Stancia carried a tall brass candlestick tied in crêpe.

"See, she has burned another candle for her husband, who is dead," commented the informative Bette. "Tante Stancia is very devout! She will enter religion if Esteban does not marry her, perhaps."

Emily felt sudden pity for the woman Esteban did not love.

He came to her, running like a boy. "To see you waiting so at the door of my house—what happiness! And you have made friends with the little sister? You have not been bored?"

"Not for a moment," she said with truth. "But she has made me feel ignorant, Esteban, and singularly useless."

He smiled tenderly. "Ah, you will not feel useless long, my Emilie! *La madre* will soon find something for you to do—there! You see?"

"Esteban! My son!" It was the matriarch's stern voice calling. "Why do you two idle there? Do you forget the hay?"

He smote himself reproachfully on the brow and hurried away, calling out orders.

This was rather more than Emily had bargained for. "Surely, madame," she protested, "you do not work in your fields on Sunday?"

"Why not?" The old woman's eyes twinkled. "They are good Catholic fields, blessed yearly with the embers of Saint Jean. And the rain, my child, is no respecter of holidays—look where clouds gather about La Rhune." She pointed toward the somber peak that broods over the range to the west, and raised her voice: "*Vite, vite*, Pedro, Bette, all of you! The rakes, and make haste! We eat no more today until the hay is up."

There seemed nothing for Emily to do but to follow down to the fields. The children made a great business of finding her sabots small enough, a wide hat to protect her beautiful whiteness. She asked for a rake as well.

"But you, mademoiselle, who are still a guest? *La madre* will not expect it of you," they protested; delighted nevertheless. They led her in triumph to the meadows, where the entire household were at work, Esteban leading the others, directing, helping, everywhere at once, in a short peasant smock

and a scarlet handkerchief tied over his head to keep the sweat out of his eyes. He stared with pleasure at Emily's appearance, but did not pause.

"So you have learned already that in a Basque family every member is useful?" he cried as he passed.

The matriarch, pitchfork in hand, was giving orders like a general on a battlefield; encouraging, speeding up her forces, herself setting a stout example, gray head bare to the sun, full black Sunday skirts turned up over a white starched petticoat. Everybody was at it, women and children raking, piling up the carts, men staggering about like miniature haystacks, invisible beneath the loads piled high on their shoulders, on forklike *porte-foins*. In the west new clouds rode the wind like great white galleons.

"*Vite, vite,* my little ones!" came now and again the high carrying call of the matriarch.

Emily had caught the contagion and worked with the rest, worked till blisters broke on her hands, and her back ached furiously, and her breath came hard. It was partly anger that spurred her; this old woman and the others, they should see that she was not so useless as she looked; that there was plenty of strength in her "ridiculous" body; that the sword, when it chooses, makes as good a bread knife as another. Meanwhile she found this mad race with the elements more exciting than any sport she had tried. She heard herself singing. When she paused

once to put the hair out of her eyes, she caught the matriarch's amused glance.

"*Çava,*" said the old woman briefly. "We shall win."

Suddenly it was upon them, not with a few first drops of warning, but like a cloudburst, a deluge: one of the terrible rainstorms of the Pyrenees.

"We have done!" came a ringing shout from Esteban, and laughing joyously, he swung Emily up into his arms and ran with her to shelter under the pelting torrent.

A fine fire roared in the kitchen, where Stancia, who alone had not gone to the haying, was putting food on the table: a soup savory with herbs, fowls stuffed with *choucroute*, a salad of crisp cresses, omelets blazing with rum.

"And because you have been such good children—" The matriarch smiled mysteriously, rising herself to fetch a large brass-bound *ferrata* of wood, beaded with cool moisture, from which she filled mugs for everyone at the table, children included.

"Hydromel!" cried Esteban. "There is no better in the *Pays Basque*, in the world. Drink, my Emilie! It is safer for woman heads than the *Yzarra.*"

The girl thought she had never tasted food or drink so exquisite. What an art, if an unconscious art, they made of living! The cup in her hand was crude, but beaten out of silver so pure she could almost have bent it with her fingers. The great stone-flagged room shone with cleanliness, danced with firelight that turned brasses and coppers into

molten gold. Outside, the rain thundered down the steep slates of the roof, poured across the windows in cataracts. At this meal everybody talked and laughed together with new freedom, even the laborers, relaxed by the consciousness of work well shared. Under the table, Esteban's hand found hers.

"You are content?" he whispered.

She replied simply, "I have never been so happy in my life!" She spoke in English, but the old woman smiled at her as if she understood.

"Certainly she understands—my grandmother understands any language she chooses! She was educated at the best convent in Spain. And today, my Emilie, you have won her heart—you will see!"

The matriarch beckoned Emily and the other women, later, to follow her upstairs; men were evidently not expected. She led them into a room furnished with one bed, a *prie-Dieu,* a single chair—evidently her own Spartan chamber; but there were several *armoires* and chests against the walls, before one of which she stopped. She handed Stancia a key. "Open," she said.

The young widow did so with evident reluctance. The contents made Emily catch her breath—linens like yellowed silk, laced and embroidered; lengths of uncut brocade and velvet, rolls of cobweb filet.

"You like these things?" said the matriarch carelessly. "They are for you."

"For me?"

At the girl's flush of embarrassed surprise, the other put a kindly hand on her shoulder. "For little

orphans who are poor and have, perhaps, no trousseau, the good God sometimes provides. Lift out the rest, Stancia."

There were dresses made of beautiful materials in the elegance of many years past; décolleté, with court trains. "As you see, this is not the trousseau of a Basquaise," remarked the matriarch. "It belonged to my first *belle-fille*—petite like you, and also of the world. Men of this house," she added, "do not necessarily take wives out of their own valley. The Urruty range far afield."

Stancia continued stoically to lift treasures out of the chest for Emily's inspection—small square-toed slippers, jewel boxes, fans, plumes. At the bottom was a tray of little filmy garments, stiff with needlework—tiny dresses, jackets, petticoats, bibs. The little girls clapped ecstatic hands.

"For the *bébé!* Oh, see, mademoiselle! For the first *bébé!*"

Emily had gone quite pale and silent. She began to realize what she had done in deceiving Esteban, in deceiving this old woman who so trusted and honored her. For the first time in her life, perhaps, she was ashamed. "Madame is too kind!" she muttered with stiff lips. "I can't—it is not possible—"

The matriarch took her hand reassuringly. "Your hesitation does you credit, my child. But remember the gift is not from Esteban, your fiancé; nor from myself, a stranger, since these things are not mine to give. They come to you from Esteban's mother,

now with God, who thus provides for her little *belle-fille* a suitable trousseau."

There were rare tears in her eyes, tears suddenly in Emily's throat. She remembered that the stern old Spartan had loved this daughter-in-law better than her own children, because she was small and delicate and rare, Esteban had said, like herself.

Small and delicate and rare! Then what had she done in such a place, such a life as this? The answer was obvious: She had died of it! Died very young, at the birth of her second child, who was Esteban.

Unreasoning panic overtook Emily, a reaction from the emotions of the day. She must get away at once, instantly, before it was too late. . . . Too late? They could hardly force her to marry against her will—the matriarch, Esteban who had sworn to hold her? Nonsense!

But she must make them angry enough not to want to keep her; so angry that Esteban would not be hurt. Despite her panic, it was still of importance that Esteban should not be hurt. She had meant to go quietly away without undeceiving them, so that they should know the truth gradually; but this trust, this generosity, had made such a course impossible. There was more decency in the girl than she knew.

She must give them a reason for not marrying Esteban; a reason that they could understand and accept. She could hardly say to the man in his own house, "My dear fellow, I'd no more think of

marrying a picturesque Basque peasant than I'd think of marrying a prosperous Greek bootblack!"

For a moment the fact that she was not Catholic suggested a loophole of escape; but they had accepted this already without demur, expecting her to be adaptable. Suddenly the idea came. Divorce! That was the thing these people would not tolerate; laxity of the marriage laws.

She said, not very steadily, "Perhaps, madame, I should not accept your kindness, your hospitality, without making a confession. I am not altogether what you think; not—a young girl."

Madame Urruty drew back. "You mean you have been married? You are a widow?"

Emily's hand went to her throat. It was harder than she had thought. "Not—exactly. My husband and I—are not together. In America"—she smiled rather desperately—"we have, as you perhaps know, the custom of divorce."

The old woman's face stiffened. With a stern gesture she dismissed the others from the room. "Send me Esteban," she said.

They went reluctantly, Stancia with a queer backward look of triumph.

"She will get him now," flashed miserably across Emily's mind. She heard him running up the stairs. He paused on the threshold, then came to her and took her hand in a strong clasp.

"What is this, *ma mère?*" His eyes were as stern as the old woman's. "What are you saying to trouble our guest?"

"How does it happen that we have such a guest?" demanded the old woman in measured tones. "How does it happen that my son's son brings into our house a woman who is wife to another man?"

"Divorced wife," corrected Emily faintly.

"How have you dared?" said the old woman, as if she had not spoken.

Emily made a final effort. "He did not know—he never asked. Oh, let me go!" she sobbed, and jerked her hand from Esteban's.

She heard him following as she ran along the corridor. He overtook her, seized her shoulder roughly, jerked her about to face him. "This—this is not true?" She could not speak for sobbing, but she saw the blazing anger die gradually out of his face. "No, it is not true," he answered himself. "It is to my grandmother you have lied. But why? Because you do not wish to marry me?" Emily nodded helplessly. "So, the test was too great," he muttered, still to himself. "Or perhaps you never wished to marry me?"

Emily could only shake her head.

"But why?" he repeated again. "Why have you done this to me? You love me?"

She found her voice at last. "Oh, my dear, can't you see—can't you see how absurd it was to expect a woman like me to live such a life as this—a life that killed your own mother?" Esteban winced. "Oh, I did not wish to say that! But think of me, me, Emily Weldon, living among the cattle, hoeing the fields, handling—handling manure, for all I

know! There's enough of it about." She laughed hysterically. "I'm not a woman like your grandmother or Stancia—I'm a lady!"

"What," he asked oddly, "is a lady?"

She laughed again. "You see? You don't even know the difference! Should I have to cook meals for the farm hands? Why, I've never done a useful thing in my life, and never shall. It's impossible, ridiculous! Girls like me are brought up to be useless. We must marry rich men, my dear—rich, can you understand? As my world counts riches, not as a peasant does, who prides himself on how many cows he keeps, or pigs! Motor cars, country houses, yachts—my own or other people's—those things are necessities to me—"

"More than love?" he interrupted.

"I'm not fool enough to expect everything at once—But love is so cheap! You can find that as you need it, Esteban. . . . Oh, don't! You're hurting me!"

He thought she meant the hand on her shoulder, and took it away; but she meant his eyes. "Yes"—he had to moisten his lips to speak—"I suppose I have been—ridiculous."

"No, no, not you!" She had been crueler in her hysteria than necessary. "I don't mean that *our* love is cheap! Listen, my dearest; I came away with you as the price of it—that's not cheap! I wanted to make some little sacrifice to it, to give—what I could. Oh, don't you see, to give you something you might keep always, that has nothing to do with

marriage? You would not understand, you were too simple. This patriarchal, pastoral, humble sort of life—I am not fitted for that sort of thing. It—it is too real for me! I am not good enough, perhaps—"

Her voice trailed away before the weariness in his eyes, the sudden disillusionment. She had accomplished her purpose only too well.

"No," he said after a moment, "I see you are not good enough." And he went heavily away.

Presently, lying face downward on her bed, she ceased to sob and began to listen for him. He would return, of course; they could not part like this! The rain had passed as suddenly as it came, and released fragrance from the contented earth blew in across her fevered thoughts, soothing, suggesting. The light that presaged dusk was mystically clear and serene. From without came homely sounds which are the same in any language—lowing of cows, the call of the child Bette to her chickens.

Emily's own words were in her ears. Yes, this life was real; the life of human beings on the earth since Adam. All that had gone before was empty, anxious dreaming. Why go back to it? There was nothing worth going back to. Something had happened to Emily. She was no longer a lady; only a woman, waiting—Esteban's woman. When he returned to her, she would know better how to make her little sacrifice to love. But he did not return.

"Then I must go to him," she said aloud. Had she been mad—was she mad now? Who cared?

She knew suddenly that no price was too high to pay for this sense of belonging to life, this hold on reality; even the price of marriage, of personal extinction.

She dried her eyes and dabbed powder over her face. With a little laugh, in a magnificent gesture of renunciation she flung her powder puff out to the birds and bees.

It was then that she saw Esteban going down towards the woods, still moving heavily, with bowed head; but not alone. His arm was about the waist of the sister-in-law, who no longer shrank from it. She leaned against him as they walked, turning up to his a face eager with tenderness. Stancia, whose love had tempted him; Stancia the comforter—

"So be it," said the girl; and something within her, some larger thing that had come into her heart with Esteban, was glad.

The details of her return to Biarritz were always vague to Emily. At the village where she had lunched with Esteban a motor lorry of tourists had paused for refreshment. She left the rented automobile—her rather odd education had included the driving of other people's cars—for Esteban to find when he followed her, and went on with the tourists.

"Sure, lady—always room for a pretty girl!" This friendly gallantry, in the accents of her native land, stayed in her mind, together with the steady pounding of the lorry, mile after mile, as she listened backward, listened despairingly, for Esteban to follow.

It was late at night when she reached the hotel and found in the drawing-room of the suite she shared with her stepmother a little entertainment going on, over a bottle of champagne. Monsieur Duval, Suzanne explained in some embarrassment, had stopped for a moment, merely, to discuss certain plans for the next day.

"Plans," suggested Emily grimly, "for our departure tomorrow?" And Suzanne, with a scared glance at her stepdaughter's face, had agreed that this was so.

The departure had been less immediate, of course; there were boxes to pack, arrangements to effect; but on an evening some days later Emily stood alone on the terrace, looking for the last time over the Bay of Biscay, exquisite under the moon she had shared with Esteban—"the light of the dead," as Basques call it.

It was all to begin over again, the old aimless wandering, the search for something which perhaps did not exist: her place in life, something to take the place of love.

As she gazed, a boat as graceful as a cat slipped out into the moon mist toward the open sea. It was a boat she had noted once in the lower town, the last of the smart steam yachts to leave after the Biarritz season.

"Ah!" murmured the voice of the director at her elbow. "Mademoiselle is admiring the *Gathid*, off for America again? One heard that she had been put into commission for a honeymoon. Ro-

mantic, *n'est-ce pas?* Mademoiselle would perhaps like to be on that pretty boat?"

"Not," she replied listlessly, "if it is going to America." Then the name struck her, brought a sharp picture of a little fat girl with kittens in her arms. "The *Gathid*—but that is a Basque name!"

"Assuredly. And a Basque boat," assented the director pleasantly. "Built for a man who knows boats—the young Urruty."

"Urruty—" Emily put a hand to her throat.

"But yes, the *pelota* player, a great sportsman—you have doubtless heard of him? Ah, I recall that mademoiselle was asking me about a family of that name some time since. I should have remembered to tell you of Esteban. But he is so rarely here. Often one finds surprising wealth among these people; but this one appears to have outdone himself—a gold mine, I think, or perhaps an oil well. Something fabulous of the sort, in the Americas. And how unspoiled, how filial! Always returning at this season because of the haying, to help with the work of the farm! A charming gesture, is it not? No wonder our young ladies and their mammas excite themselves over his visits. And now it is too late; there has been a marriage, one hears—a family marriage. Such a pity," he murmured gently, "that mademoiselle herself could not have made the acquaintance of this delightful fellow. But what have you? What is the matter here?"

For Emily had begun to laugh; laughed and laughed and could not stop, though she dug her

nails into her palms, stuck a handkerchief into her mouth and bit it; laughed until Monsieur Duval in some alarm ran to get her a glass of *eau-de-vie*— which appeared in due time upon the bill, with a franc charged extra for service.

EMILIANA

CHAPTER TWO

EMILIANA: disclosing various odd passages in the growth of a young person of quality

A BIT of luck happened to Mrs. Weldon just at a time when consolation was indicated on the part of Providence: her only remaining husband died. She was doubly a widow, with all the widowly emoluments.

"Which goes to prove that there is an Eye on us, after all!" she told her stepdaughter piously, "and that we really ought to go to church more often, especially in English communities. The English take religion so seriously!"

They were progressing by gradual stages from Biarritz to England, where the younger lady intended to marry Sir Harry Congers, although the baronet was as yet presumably unaware of these intentions; and not wanting to be obvious about it, and also desiring to refresh acquaintance with British atmosphere, the two were pausing at Interlaken, in a certain hotel above the town much frequented between seasons by middle-aged and gentry wishing to get the London fog out of their lungs, and the heavy London dinner parties out of their systems.

Emily always found Switzerland, and particularly Interlaken, depressing despite its beauty; but she felt that it might be a good preparation for her

future career as Lady Congers. She had not been often in England, never socially; for although the Weldons had made some cordial English acquaintances here and there, instinct—or was it her wise father? had warned her that traveling acquaintances were not always so cordial upon the native heath. She felt the need of studying Sir Harry's compatriots at closer range before attempting their fastness.

"I believe," said Mrs. Weldon, wiping her eyes over her lawyer's letter—cautiously, for the black came off them easily—"that the time has come for me to join the English Church. The rector—or is he called the chaplain—seems so sympathetic! He is lonely himself, he tells me."

"Better keep off the clergy, Suzanne," advised her stepdaughter impartially. "This one has a married look—the married ones are usually lonely. Why waste your time?"

She sighed a little at the thought of having to invade England under the ægis of Suzanne. If only her stepmother's hair were not quite so auburn, her taste in dress so naïve!— Suzanne was not of those who lack "the courage of color on the wing."

"I suppose," the girl suggested carelessly, "you will be putting on black for Mr. Blodgett?" Mrs. Weldon enjoyed mourning, and it toned her down a good deal.

"Do you think that would be proper?" demurred the other.

Considering the money he had left her, quite

apart from the settlements at the time of her divorce, Emily felt, she said, that it would be a most suitable compliment. "Or perhaps half mourning, mamma? White linings to things, you know. With pearls."

"No amethysts?" Mrs. Weldon had recently bought some very good ones.

But Emily was firm: no amethysts. Purple had its dangers, in the hands of Suzanne. "If you are to pay Mr. Blodgett the courtesy of mourning for him at all, I think he is entitled to strict black and white. Really, that will was very generous!"

"Wasn't it?" sighed the former Mrs. Blodgett. "But there never was anything of the tightwad about Charley. If you wanted a cocktail he ordered six, in case you might want another. That," she sighed again, "is what I call a man!— Not that I mean to make any invidious distinctions, dearest; only you would hardly describe your father in just that way, now, would you? You'd say of Archibald Weldon, 'There is what I call a gentleman! a perfect gentleman.'"

His daughter winced. "Hardly as bad as that! But I know, of course, what you mean. People do seem to have married my father more for his personal distinction than for his sterling qualities. Just as, I suppose, they will marry me."

"They'd better be at it, then," remarked her stepmother tartly. She occasionally suspected the girl of laughing at her; nor had she quite forgiven her for dragging them away from Biarritz in the midst of her own little affair with the hotel director there.

"The Pyrenees don't seem to have agreed with you this time, Emily," she added: "you seem *lasse*, and rather sallow."

Do broken hearts, the girl wondered, make one sallow? She grinned at herself. Thwarted ambition was the better name for her malady. To have let herself go over a picturesque ineligible, to have torn herself by main strength out of his arms—and then to have discovered that he was perhaps the most eligible of the lot! . . . It was enough, she thought, to put any girl off her color.

"Suzanne," she asked, unconscious of the wistfulness in her voice, "do you remember how you felt when Mr. Blodgett—er, defected?"

"Do I? Well, rather!" There was a salutary frankness between these two companions in adventure. "I felt limp as one of those dolls, the sort strung on rubber, you know, when the snap goes out of the elastic. Slightly nauseated, too," she added reminiscently, "from the shock. You know he'd caught me getting kissed by one of his friends—fancy! As if any pretty woman isn't likely to get kissed by her husband's friends! I like attentions, of course—who doesn't? But that's not saying I wouldn't rather have been kissed by Charley Blodgett than by any other man I knew. *At the time.* Later—well, a woman's a fool to sit around waiting for any man to come back to her; men aren't that way. If Charley's going to be such a dog in the manger, I said, begrudging a person any little innocent affection that comes her way, why, I'll show

him how much *I* care! And I showed him. The only way to get what you want in this world"—she voiced her little philosophy for one who needed philosophy—"is to stop wanting it."

Emily remembered that. Experience, even other people's experience, has its value; she must take pains thereafter to be as indifferent as she seemed. But she felt for this trivial, foolish, innately vulgar creature an odd stab of pity: did they suffer their little sufferings too, the featherweights?

It seemed her one souvenir of the affair with Esteban, this new capacity for pity; pity for herself, for other women, for her futile, vain father, for all the poor, grasping, groping hands which reach out so confidently for what is theirs, and find themselves full of nothingness.

Suzanne was again complimenting the Eye of Providence on its discernment; just when her clothes were in tatters, bleached to rags by that terrible Biscay sun. "And it would have been impossible to get decent mourning anywhere in the south of Europe, they mourn so elaborately. Would you mind, darling, if we hurried on to Paris now, and got my fittings before those Americans have picked over all the new models? Having lived for some years abroad, Suzanne naturally resented Americans.

But Emily let her go on to Paris alone, preferring to stay in Interlaken as long as possible with a friend who was ill there, on the porch of a little chalet overlooking the hotel tennis courts. Strange, she thought, what a fatal attraction she seemed to have

for people who were of no use to her!—elderly spinsters, fat old men, sick persons.

She had been aware of eyes eagerly following her from this porch whenever she appeared on the courts; rather more reckless of her game than usual, less careful not to win too often from her adversaries; even when they were men. Tennis seemed, after the *pelota,* hardly worth while, a game for curates and women. No woman, she thought with an oddly feminine pride, could ever play the *pelota!*

Once as she passed, a husky voice had called down to her from the porch, "Girl, I say, g-girl! Would you ever have time to come and talk to a fellow?"

She gave a brief, smiling nod upward, and presently appeared in the room behind him, whence she dismissed the nurse who tried to intercept her.

"No, your patient's not asleep. And if he is, I'll wake him," she said. "I dare say he's tired of being asleep."

The patient chuckled over it until he choked. "Watkins out-Watkined!" he remarked joyously. "American, of course! . . . I was wondering; but only an American could have handled my nurse."

"She looks rather a bully," commented Emily. "Why do you have her?"

The boy, whose name was John Wallace—"only they call me Wally"—explained that you do not have an English nurse; she has you, and during good behavior only.

"Not that I mean to complain—the family provide Nurse Watkins, as they provide Switzerland

and the chalet and everything; and it's a whole lot better than a sanitarium. Ever try one?"

Emily had not. Looking at the boy's flushed, hollow cheeks, the brilliant pathos of his eyes, she wondered where the family was, and asked him.

"Oh, it's only cousins," he explained, "and an uncle of sorts. Very busy in Wall Street."

"I see," said the girl gently. It struck her that here was one as much alone in the world as herself, if not more so. Again that inconvenient pity stirred.

This was the sort of thing that made Switzerland so depressing, no doubt: the hard, bright air, the Swiss cross flying everywhere, suggestive of ambulances and Red Cross stations; the neat little chalets, with sleeping porches, so frequently for rent, cheerfully trimmed with potted plants—always potted; they never seemed a native growth; the cold, impersonal service in the hotels, like hospital attendance; the sales people in the souvenir shops, who knew nothing of the social possibilities of barter, declined surlily to haggle and to compliment after the fashion of their French and Italian neighbors. Why, she thought, the Swiss natives cannot even sing; they yodel!—barbarous noise. And over all the Jungfrau presiding in a white apron like a neat Swiss housewife, among other mountains glittering with cleanliness, aloof, unfriendly—nothing subtle and alluring about the Jungfrau!

The Wally boy laughed over her opinion of Switzerland. "I know; it's all about as grim and bright and sanitary as a hospital corridor. But it's so

expensive that it must be good! Where else could a crock like me get enough oxygen for his half-a-lung?"

She told him of other mountains she knew: La Rhune, the Canigou, capricious, laughing, darkling Southern mountains, sweet and moody as spoiled women, covering their breasts with robes of blossom, shrouding their high heads in mantillas of mist; valleys where the sun loved to linger and the wind blew softly, straight from Africa; where the snow came tumbling down in eager waterfalls, so that the air was always full of the music of it, and of little bells, and of bees. She loved to think of the Pyrenees, Esteban's country; and with this boy she found herself thinking aloud.

He looked away from her when she had finished. "Something rather wonderful must have happened to you there," he said, shyly.

"Yes," she answered after a moment; and told him about that, too. It was almost like talking to someone who was not present.

"He was your man," commented the boy, when she had done.

Emily shrugged, remarking with bravado. "Fortunately, there are others!"—and soon had him chuckling again, laughing aloud over candid accounts of her adventures by land and sea and air; for she numbered among her admirers several aviators.

Young Wally had his national sense of humor developed beyond the ordinary, perhaps, by a spe-

cial need of it; and something in the girl's casual acceptance of life as a sort of perpetual tiger hunt, in which you must stalk and bag your quarry before it bagged you, appealed to this; also to a certain boyish chivalry which winced at the thought of ladies in distress. He could never be quite sure whether to regard Emily as huntress or hunted.

"Girls certainly know how to take care of themselves nowadays," he chuckled, over an account of how she had postponed a too-eager suitor by spotting her face and arms plentifully with dots of rouge while an epidemic of smallpox happened to be raging; which gave time for the necessary investigations.

"One learns," said Emily. "Besides, I was coached for it by a careful parent, who saw that there were only two ways of acquiring power in the world; to work for it or to marry it; and chose for his child the lesser of two evils. . . . Oh, yes, I manage to take care of myself. The question is, shall I be able to provide for myself a future in the style to which I am accustomed?"

"*You* will be able to do anything you want to do," said the boy soberly, "if you really want to."

Emily found her new confidant rather stimulating. It was the first time she had permitted herself the luxury of friendship; just as, until Esteban, she had never permitted herself the luxury of love. Emotions, her father had warned her, interfere with the real affairs of life. "Do not labor a point," was one of his favorite maxims; suggestion was ever

more artistic than completion. Why have intimates when acquaintances were so much less exacting, with no inconvenient claim to establish?

Yet here she was, for the second time in one summer, in danger of letting a very inconvenient claim establish itself; though of a quite different order from the first. Platonics—platonics between a young man and a young woman? How amusedly Mr. Weldon would have smiled at the idea!

The Wally boy's loneliness, however, appealed to some need in her nature, produced a most unfamiliar aching sensation in her young breasts. Everybody, she understood with her odd new prescience, is lonely underneath; that is why we are all so gay, and grasping, and desperate for pleasure. But the dying are loneliest of all; they who have so strange a way to travel, toward who knows where? Her father himself was lonely on his deathbed; though Archibald Weldon had the widest, and it may be added the least exacting, acquaintance in Europe. Suzanne had not helped then, for all her voluble sympathies: one married the Suzannes to live with, not to die with. And Emily his child had helped least of all; visiting the sick bed at perfunctory intervals, with a fastidious distaste of which the moribund gentleman was entirely aware.

"I am not," he had said apologetically, "looking my best, dear child, in this saffron dressing gown—one needs a very fresh complexion to wear saffron well." And shortly before his death, he had required the nurse to hand him a little pot of rouge.

Emily, years after, recalled that pot of rouge with a sharp belated pang of something like remorse; which may have accounted for her goodness to Wally.

For she was very good to him indeed, so good as to surprise herself. "It's such a relief," the boy confessed to her once in the course of the long daily talks they had together, "not to have to feel things any more! I used to feel my feelings so hard."

The girl, too, was glad not to have to feel her feelings hard, just then; and reminded herself not to flirt with this boy, in thought, word, or deed. She laid aside deliberately, as she might lay aside a scarf or fan, her little arsenal of charms: the cool, sidelong lure of the eyes, the provocative dimple, the careless touch of the hand under which she had seen her victims start as under an electric shock. Even her voice became matter-of-fact and comradely, all the delicious throaty thrill gone out of it.

"I'll play fair this time, if I have to wear a mask and gloves!" she thought; unaware of the wistfulness in the boy's following eyes whenever she left him. They were always smiling when she saw them again, bright with anticipation of more adventures to share vicariously.

He had got out a Journal, lately fallen somewhat into disuse, in which he kept a record of all the things, as he said, which never happened to him; and in this he was entering, under the title of EMILIANA, the tale of his friend's experiences, as a valuable chapter on Americana.

Some day he meant to give them to the world, he declared grandiloquently, bound in half calf and handsome lettering, if only as an antidote to a certain favorite American classic dealing with the affairs of The Glad Girl.

"With the subtitle of The Bad Girl?" inquired Emily.

But Wally did not smile. "I wish you wouldn't say things like that," he said. "You haven't a bad bone in your body!"

"Except the femur," she demurred, "which really ought to be a little longer, physiologically speaking, but is atoned for, perhaps, by an almost perfect tibia."

"Ass!" he cried, flinging the Journal after her as she fled.

Nurse Watkins, entering at the moment, lifted shocked eyebrows. Nurse Watkins often had to lift shocked eyebrows over their conduct, and especially their conversation, which covered everything that could be talked about under heaven and earth, and a good deal that could not; both young people being products of the Age of Candor.

"Such goings-on!" she reported to her friend, who was maid to a certain Lady Norbury stopping at the hotel. "I don't so much mind the free, bold way they talk, tibias and femurs, and things like that—though I must say thigh bones seem hardly a polite subject for conversation. But when it comes to kissing the patient full on the lips right before my very eyes, that is something I really cannot stummick!"

For Emily did this heinous thing, quite simply, whenever she happened to think about it; with a warm, sound, sisterly heartiness that was undoubtedly put to her credit in heaven.

The first time it happened, young Wallace drew back aghast. "Look here, you musn't do that sort of thing!" he stuttered. "D-don't you know I'm contagious?"

"So am I," said Emily calmly. "If there are germs of disease, it stands to reason there must be germs of health, too; and I've got plenty and to spare. Why, my lad, I'm so bursting with health that if I don't look out, one of these days I shall be fat! So gather the rosebuds while ye may."

Therefore Wally gathered them—having first surreptitiously wiped his lips with antiseptic—in the spirit in which they were offered, with a steady courage that was the equal, had she but known it, of the girl's own.

Even Nurse Watkins had to admit that though Miss Weldon was probably no better than she should be, she did the patient good. Whether it was his interest in collecting EMILIANA; whether the germs of health she shared so freely were beginning to take effect, the fact remains that he showed symptoms of reviving appetite; and for the first time ordered out his car to take Emily driving.

It was a very good car; the girl looked it over with the appraising eyes of habit; a large, expensive landau type, with seats which extended into *chaises longues* in which one could comfortably sleep; and

Wally's man Anatole drove it, a willing little Frenchman whom Wally pronounced a far better nurse than the tart Miss Watkins.

"Uncle felt that a female touch was necessary to soothe the fevered brow—uncle would," he explained. "As it happens, Watkins' touch is like the caress of an impassioned brickbat; but since the old boy naturally wanted to spend all the money possible to appease his family feelings, what does it matter? You can see how it is! He can't have me dying about all over the place to slow music, without at least providing all the comforts of home. Everything of the Very Best, and Damn the Expense—that is uncle's motto."

"And a very good one, too," remarked Emily, newly thoughtful. Did uncle happen to be a bachelor?

He did not, grinned the boy wickedly; he even had sons of his own, so that Wally himself was a bad bet. "Better stick to the baronet, old dear; though I'm always willing to oblige at a pinch."

Emily explained it was merely the car that had tempted her; she always liked to drive a good car. The only way to enjoy Switzerland, she declared, or the world, for that matter, was from the seat of a high-powered and expensive automobile. But even as she spoke, she was remembering a very different car, wheezing and panting its happy way up mountain sides strewn with flowers as for a festival, her lover's arm around her, her lover's kisses on her face;

up and up, until the clouds received them, and the world was not—

"What," asked the boy beside her gently, "are you thinking of when you look like that?"

She replied that she was thinking, as became a dutiful wife, of her future baronet.

When they got home, she found opportunely a letter from her friend Miss Dibbs, at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, saying that a clerical cousin had offered her his rectory in Sussex for the remainder of the summer, and that she wanted Emily for her guest.

"Suzanne was certainly right about that Eye," sighed the girl. "Sussex—do you realize it? With Sir Harry living right in the same county?"

"Fine! Couldn't be better!" said the boy stoutly. "The Dibbs lady instead of that compromising stepmother; a clerical cousin, a rectory background—why, my girl, it looks to me like a wow!"

Undoubtedly, admitted Emily, it promised to be a wow; but there were complications. Suzanne, the purse bearer, was still in Paris, and wanted to join some friends in Deauville for a few days before joining Emily. If Suzanne were not to join Emily at all, the sinews of war, as she put it delicately, would be lacking. And Suzanne could not be counted upon to coöperate from a distance. Her benefactions were at best spasmodic, and she was slightly jealous of Miss Dibbs. Of course, mused Emily, thinking aloud, there was her own dot to draw upon. But in case anything slipped up, what is a girl in Europe without a dot? And there was

also Sir Harry's parting gift, a bracelet of very good sapphires in a Cartier setting, doubtless negotiable at nearly par. The irony of this idea appealed to her: Sir Harry hoist, as it were, by his own petard.

She paused abruptly in these maidenly reflections as she caught Wally's stare of shocked astonishment.

"Good Gad!" he stuttered. "You mean you haven't any *money?*"

There was about enough, she explained, to pay the hotel bill and the tips.

"You mean you're in the habit of s-selling off your little what-nots when you want to g-go anywhere?"

That, explained Emily lightly, was what little what-nots were for; had he not observed the elegant *monts-de-piété* in the neighborhood of all the better hotels? Though heretofore she had not happened to patronize them, thanks to the amiability of her stepmother.

Wally, usually more than ready to be amused by Emily's confidences, did not smile over this one. "Look here, I can let you have whatever money you need!" he said, rather brusquely.

To his dismay the color flooded her silvery pallor, well up into the roots of her hair, and her lips trembled as if she were going to cry. But her voice was steady and cool as usual. "I am sorry you seem to have misunderstood me," she said, "People don't, often. There are limits, you know, to the attention even a girl like me has to accept from her admirers."

"Damn it all!" cried the boy, clutching at her. "I'm not an admirer, I'm a friend!"

Her quivering lips relaxed into a sudden smile. "I forgot," she said after a moment. "So you are. That does make a difference."

The matter was at length arranged on a purely sporting basis. Emily, if she landed her baronet, was to return Wally's loan at a good rate of interest. If not, the loss was mutual. They shook hands on it, solemnly.

"But it means, old dear, that I've got to leave you now."

"What of it?" he replied ungallantly. "I'll keep till you get back."

"Will you?" she asked with a catch in her voice. "Will you, Wally boy?"

"I'll do my damnedest to keep," he promised; and made her promise in turn to get it over with as soon as possible, and return to Switzerland on her wedding trip: "No shilly-shallying, mind! It's now or never. I've got to see you settled and safe before I—well, before I need my money back. Remember, young 'un, you're marrying for two!"

They parted, chuckling as usual; and Emily wept all the way to Paris, as she had never wept for Esteban, nor for herself. . . .

"The only way to get what you want in this world is to stop wanting it—" Emily had occasion in England to remember more than once her stepmother's sound little bit of philosophy. Having ceased completely to want Sir Harry Congers and all his works,

she found the baronet ready to drop into her hand, as she wrote Wally, like an overripe fruit.

Not that Sir Harry was exactly overripe; well-preserved would have been the better description. Miss Dibbs, indeed, fluttered and delighted by her young protégée's prowess, thought Sir Harry decidedly a figger of a man; and as for Stoke Norbury, the ancestral estate which Sir Harry had bought in from cousins of his dead wife, she pronounced that one of the finest properties in England. Why Emily found herself unmoved by its deer park, its conservatories, its early-Georgian façade, and mid-Victorian furnishings, and late-Edwardian bathrooms, she could not have said; she had intended all her life to become mistress of exactly such an establishment as Stoke Norbury, preferably situated in England. She could hardly have been comparing it unfavorably with a shabby old hacienda in the foothills of the Pyrenees, with beehives in the cobbled courtyard, and cattle stirring sleepily in the stalls beneath the rooms!

"Think, my dear, of the possibilities!" urged Miss Dibbs, sensing this strange indifference; her innocent British snobbery mingling with spinsterly delight in so romantic a situation. "Twenty bedrooms, a stableful of horses, a presentation at court through Lady Norbury—and a brewery is really a very desirable thing to have in a family nowadays. Congers' Ale, you know?—quite one of our British institutions."

Emily pricked an ear. She had not known of the

brewery. "So-ho! No wonder this little gentleman has to be so particular whom he marries!"

Of course, agreed Miss Dibbs, simply; Dukes might be careless in such matters; they frequently were so. But a man in Sir Harry's position could hardly afford to be rash. "Which makes it all the more of a compliment that he has chosen you!"

Emily did not flinch. "At least I shall be able to supply free beer to the merry villagers, which ought to make me popular with them," she remarked, amiably. "But perhaps we'd better wait till we are asked?"

Miss Dibbs hoped she had not been indelicate. "Sir Harry is certainly going to make a declaration, dearest, I am sure of it!—almost at once!"

The auspicious occasion duly arrived, in a most auspicious manner. The county, remembering old acquaintance with Miss Dibbs, had called at the rectory promptly and frequently; almost everyone called on Americans anyway, since the war, and the girl was really very lovely. Invitations began to pour in for tea, for dinner, for week-ends. . . . "One had positively forgotten how many friends one had!" fluttered Miss Dibbs, ordering a new dinner frock. The Misses Congers in particular, Sir Harry's sisters, took Emily to their bosoms; perhaps it would be more accurate to say to their hearts. Long, lean ladies they were, of the figure that would have been called in their youth willowy, who affected slithery, trailing black satin for evening wear, and for the daytime those sports frocks of knitted jersey, of

which Suzanne had once remarked, "Nobody ought to be caught dead in them who wasn't at least a thirty-six." The Misses Congers did not look so well-fed as their brother.

"I wish," said Emily once, "that Sir Harry's sisters did not remind me so much of eels."

"Eels?" repeated Miss Dibbs, rather shocked. "Oh, it must be the name, dearest!—'slippery as a conger eel,' you know—or, is it a Congo eel? Or maybe Conger's Ale," she murmured in some bewilderment— "I am sure the Miss Congerses aren't at all like eels, really!"

Amphibious or not, they had a way of twining themselves affectionately about Emily which the girl did not find, somehow, convincing. "Poor things!" she thought, with her new insight into the troubles of other people. "I daresay they're desperately afraid I'm going to marry their brother and turn them out. And they're quite right: I am!"

She was duly dined at Stoke Norbury; the horses, the rose houses, the family servants and portraits and plate were all duly exhibited to her, with a significance so marked that other guests who were present exchanged glances, and increased their cordiality. The future lady of Stoke Manor, with a fine yacht waiting her pleasure at Cowes, and an ancestral brewery still functioning prosperously in the background, was hardly a person to ignore. Even Lady Norbury, an impressive cousin imported for the occasion, deigned to lift a rather cool lorgnon and recall hav-

ing seen Emily at Interlaken; though under whose care she could not quite recall?

"Under nobody's care," said Emily; and explained that American girls are sometimes trusted about alone.

"What a pity," murmured Lady Norbury gently, sheathing her lorgnon.

After dinner, at a signal from Sir Harry, the Misses Congers led the other guests away for their turn at the rose houses and the portrait gallery, leaving the drawing-room to him; and there, throwing all caution to the winds, the impassioned baronet asked Emily for her hand.

I didn't know they did this sort of thing any more, she thought interestedly, reflecting that it takes a really national dignity to go down upon one knee without looking absurd. Sir Harry managed it, if a trifle stiffly.

"One had meant to propose out in the yew walk beside the sundial," he explained, "but the dews are rather heavy at this time of year."

So Emily gave him her hand, which he kissed—"outside *and* in," she added rather surprisingly, in her letter to Wally; and the rest of the company returned, and they accepted congratulations.

"The naïveté of this nation," continued the letter to Wally, "in matters of sentiment, is astonishing. Talk about British reserve! When you get engaged in England you at once cackle as if you had laid an egg; and everybody runs to cackle with you, and it's

all very quaint and charming and sincere. But a little disconcerting to the unprepared."

Emily's stepmother, as guardian, had next to be consulted, by letter; and gave her unqualified assent by wire.

"You clever darling," she telegraphed expensively to Emily. "I am coming right over to embrace you both."

Emily wired hastily in reply that she would meet her stepmother in London, and be embraced there. It seemed wiser not to spring Suzanne on the county until the nuptials were safely consummated; her effect on Sir Harry himself, at close range, was problematical. The wedding was scheduled to take place immediately, however.

"Why not?" She had consented to her lover's pleading. "You almost escaped me once, you know; I'd better take no chances."

The flattered baronet, charmed with her pretty wit, pressed her to name the day; and she named the third one after her stepmother's arrival. So, their banns having been duly read, Emily slipped off, greatly to Miss Dibbs' disappointment, to be married in London.

Suzanne met her at Charing Cross, looking the picture of maternal satisfaction; looking indeed, thought Emily, not only as if she had just eaten the canary, but thoroughly digested it.

"Darling!" she exclaimed, receiving her stepchild into an embrace highly scented with *narcisse noir*.

"What a moment! How your father must be turning in his grave!"

"Dear me, I hope not," said Emily.

"With pleasure, of course; with pure gratification. The British nobility! Always his favorite. Think, my dear, if you had taken that Egyptian Prince who followed us about last winter—a colored man!"

"But, mamma dear," murmured Emily hastily, the British nobility being well within earshot, "you don't seem to have gone into mourning, after all?" Suzanne's chic black was certainly lined, not with white, but with the latest shade in Chanel red.

She blushed. "I felt, dearest, that mourning, even half mourning, might not after all be appropriate to—to a trousseau!"— And stepping aside, she disclosed the fact that she was not alone. Her companion was Monsieur Duval, the director of their recent hotel in Biarritz.

The two had met, it appeared, not entirely by accident, at Deauville; where they had been for some weeks enjoying a surreptitious *lune de miel.*

"I would have told you about it at once, dearest," said Suzanne, "except that you seemed a little, just a little, unsympathetic about my Armand. Now, however, you will better understand!" She shot a demurely coquettish glance in the direction of the attendant baronet.

Sir Harry took these additions to his family circle with a rather better grace than Emily had feared he would; indeed he was in such a state of blissful

fatuity that he would have accepted an odalisque as a mother-in-law without cavil.

"When I go into anything, I go into it hair and hide. That's the sort of a chap I am," he assured his fiancée.

Suzanne had always interested Sir Harry, in a cautious sort of way; now he found her practiced cajoleries rather grateful. Not every staid, circumspect British gentleman gets himself embraced so generously by a fair plump lady smelling of *narcisse noir;* delightfully American of her, he thought it. As for Duval—"The fellow really orders an excellent dinner, has positively a genius for vintages. He knows how to make himself distinctly agreeable, if you ask me!"

He would, said Emily grimly; it was Duval's business to make himself agreeable. Also to order excellent vintages, at other people's expense.

"My word, but you're rather hard on a chap, aren't you?" laughed Sir Harry. "What a little vixen it is!"

Emily accepted the reproof with pre-wifely meekness, and endeavored to curb her distaste for Suzanne's new husband; after all, he was Suzanne's affair. The result was to have been expected. Duval lost his wary discretion, and became insinuatory.

One of the great advantages of the present arrangement, he told her under the cover of the others' talk, was the opportunity it offered for better acquaintance with the so-charming Emily, who did not, unfortunately, like him; but if the *si charmante*

Emilie would but give him a moment of her time in private—say half an hour in the morning before luncheon?—he could tell her something that would perhaps cause her to like him better.

It was no use; she could not fraternize with Duval. Something about the man offended her.

"There is nothing you could possibly have to say," she told him carelessly, "which would hold my attention, at any time, for as long as half an hour!" What was the use of being Lady Congers if she could not afford herself a few enemies?

The Duvals were showing her a new aspect of her future husband. Under their influence, and that of rejuvenated emotions, certain inhibitions relaxed. Beneath the correct surface, the fattish body in its well-cut clothes, the smooth-shaven purplish jaw, the formel manner, Emily began to catch glimpses of a man who was not native to Stoke Norbury; a shrewd, predatory little man, who might at a pinch be rather difficult. She recalled the subdued, propitiatory manner toward him of his sisters. There were moments when Emily, who was no coward, found herself a little afraid of her tamed baronet.

One such moment occurred on the eve of their wedding. The Duvals had entertained them at a final dinner; the food was superlative, the wines more so; and Suzanne had shown the tact to leave them alone afterward in her own drawing-room.

"*I* know how it is with love's young dream!" she murmured, coquettishly, retiring.

"Who better?" retorted Sir Harry, with a robust shout of laughter.

Her fiancé, Emily realized, had been drinking rather more than was good for him. Careful, careful, she said to herself; Emily, with drunken men, always felt absurdly weak and helpless, though she was neither. She judged the time propitious, however, to proffer a certain request she had to make. She had heard that morning from Switzerland, not from young Wallace himself, but from his nurse, who wrote that her patient was not doing well at all; he seemed much weaker, and complained continually of cold, though the sun was bright enough. If Miss Weldon was thinking of returning, it might be well to return soon. Even Nurse Watkins seemed to have succumbed to Wally's pathos sufficiently to be anxious.

So when Sir Harry invited Emily amorously to come and occupy his knee, she did so, after the tentative fashion of a bird perching upon a limb in a high wind.

"Harry my lad," she murmured, playfully disarranging his white tie so that the ends of it stood up like rabbit's ears—a caress new to him—"would you mind quite too awfully if I didn't go honeymooning with you tomorrow on your pretty yacht? One gets rather fed up honeymooning in yachts, they tell me; and besides it's so much done as to be vulgar; like Niagara Falls. Let's go to some quiet place in the mountains, you and I—"

"Humph!" said the baronet, "not much solitude

to be had at Interlaken; for I suppose that's where you want to go?"

Emily was rather taken aback by this discernment. "Why, yes it is! But how did you know?"

He gave a thick laugh. "Not much I don't know about you and your affairs, my gel! The latest one —why, Interlaken was agog with it! Had it down to a minute how long you stayed in the chap's room every day, where you went driving with him, how often you kissed him good night. It just happened that his nurse, you see, was thick with the maid of my cousin, Lady Norbury. So my sisters got it rather straight."

Eels, indeed, thought Emily; conger eels. "By way of the servants' hall?" she inquired, haughtily.

"Servants' halls are damn useful institutions when it comes to keeping tabs on the most fascinating little she-devil in Europe," commented Sir Harry, loquaciously. "Did you think you were pulling any wool over my eyes, you and your respectable Dibbs tabby cat? Remember, I've seen you in action, my lady!" Emily made an ineffectual attempt to descend from his knee. "None of that," said Sir Harry. "You'll stay where you belong! In for the hair, in for the hide—that's the sort I am! I just want you to know I'm jolly well on; that's all— What about the Polish chap, who shot himself on your doorstep because you wouldn't have him, eh?" Emily winced; there had indeed been such a catastrophe. "What about the fellow that wrote his wife he was about to bolt with you, but when he got to

your hotel, dammit if you hadn't already bolted alone!"

"Would it have been nicer," she asked innocently, "if I'd waited to bolt with him? You see, I had just heard about his wife."

"Really nice little girls don't have that sort of thing happen to them, just the same," said Sir Harry; and kissed indulgently, despite struggles, the pretty hollow at the base of Emily's throat.

He continued the tale of her shortcomings; seemingly he was well versed in EMILIANA. "And no sooner was my back turned on you, there at Biarritz," he concluded, "than along came a dashing boatman of sorts, eh, what? That hurts? Duval thought it might!"

"Duval!" said the girl slowly. Her head lifted. "So you discuss your wife with Duval, as well as with—other servants?"

He laughed in high approval; the hauteur of this little nobody from nowhere was what had at first attracted him. "You're not my wife, yet!" he reminded her. "But you will be tomorrow. And then I want you to remember something: the past can't be helped, but your future's mine, d'you see? Mine! And not an hour, not a minute of it is to be spent on other lovers, in Interlaken or anywhere else! D'you see?"

"The rest," said Emily, freeing herself at last, "is true, Congers, more or less. But the boy at Interlaken is not my lover. He is my friend."

"That's the devil of it—they all are!" cried the

man. "I've never run across an old flame of yours (and I've taken pains to run across a number of 'em!) who had a word to say against you; wasn't willing to take you on again at any price! How do you manage it, you little witch?"

"The boy at Interlaken," she repeated wearily, "is not my lover."

"Rot! Do you deny you kissed him? Why, that nurse ran a peep-show of sorts for her friends, to watch your fond embraces!"

"Certainly I kissed him, often," said Emily. "He needed it."

The enamored baronet laughed aloud. "Did he now? Well, hereafter your friends, needy or not, get no kisses out of my wife. All kisses strictly for home consumption. That's the sort of chap I am, d'you see?"

"I begin to see," said Emily.

He softened toward her. "Poor little gel—as if you could help yourself! Lips too red to need rouge; eyes that can sear like ice (they're doin' it now, and I like it); hands with an electric current in 'em—who's to blame you? They mean something. I know the type! I know the breed—why, dammit, I knew your father! One of those he-beauties that hang around the casinos and bathing beaches, on the lookout for opportunities; the wickedest old rotter on the Continent. They say his women—"

"They do not say it to me," remarked Emily, white and very quiet.

It sobered Sir Harry. "Beg pardon, my dear! Always talk too much when I'm drinking. . . . Well, never mind. It's all over. I'm not saying I didn't try to escape, but you were too much for me, you little witch! I took you against my better judgment; and now, dammit if I won't keep you!"

"Another man said that once," observed the girl, "but he didn't."

"He wasn't me," said the baronet complacently. "Your sort come high, but we must have you!"

"Must you, indeed?" laughed the girl, deftly interposing a chair in the way of pursuit. From that she flitted to the far side of a table; felt for the knob of the door behind her; and so to bed, as Pepys would say. An impassioned whisper pursued her through the keyhole: "I'll pay you out for this tomorrow, you little rascal!"

But Sir Harry had no chance to pay her out; for the morrow, their wedding day, found her alone on a Channel steamer, bound for Switzerland.

She reached Interlaken none too soon. A doctor whom she met at Wally's door shrugged noncommittally. He was no worse, Wally assured her faintly; only very tired, and always so cold.

"It's this beastly Swiss sun—like the stuff they brew in the cellars back home nowadays; looks all right, smells all right, but no authority to it!"

Very well, said Emily briskly; they would go and find a sun that had authority to it; and took the matter up with Nurse Watkins. She demurred; doubted whether the patient was strong enough to

move. She had been engaged to remain in Switzerland until—

"Until the patient dies?" finished Emily, grimly; and took it upon herself to dismiss Nurse Watkins.

"Good egg!" grinned Wally, when this news was reported to him. "Oh, very good egg, indeed!—though what the family will say to it, I don't know."

"You won't know for quite a while," replied Emily, "as we shall be out of reach before they have a chance to say anything." She had written to Wally's uncle explaining that she had appointed herself the boy's nurse, and why.

His grin widened. "Hell of a nurse you'll make! You're filling that hot-water bottle now till it looks like a dirigible ready to cast off from its moorings."

There was more to nursing than hot-water bottles, Emily told him airily: Anatole would attend to all the gruesome details. "Besides, I need the salary you are to pay me for my expert services. So tomorrow morning, my hearty, we take the road for parts unknown."

"What sort of parts?"

She shrugged. "Anywhere away from doctors and thermometers and hot-water bottles and sleeping porches. Does the idea appeal?"

"Stepping heavenward," he murmured; and lapsed into the drowsiness which occupied the larger part of his days.

Emily's plan was not so vague as it sounded; she knew quite well where they were going, though she

put off facing the knowledge as one postpones the grasping of a nettle.

Anatole meanwhile disclosed resourceful qualities. His native Provençal hospitality rose to the occasion, and he laid at their disposal the sun of the *pays natal;* than which, he assured them, there was none more salutary to be had in the whole of Europe. It saw itself, he said, that a land so productive of vineyards and poets had more to offer than a land productive of nothing but rocks and snows and innkeepers. They crossed as rapidly as possible into France.

Anatole, as they journeyed, beguiled the way with tales of troubadours and lovers native to the realm. There were Aucassin and Nicolette, Petrarch and his Laura; there was the vagabond King René and his lovely Queen, who went about disguised as beggars, singing their way into the hearts of the people, so that when in his poor old age the King called for an army to go to the help of besieged France, the peasants rallied to him with scythes and pruning shears and ancient muskets, and all the gold out of their little hoards. Never such another odd and ragged army as took the field with old singing René of Provence, but it turned the tide of victory; and then the King went back to his garden in Tarascon, and finished his *sestina* before he died.

"And still, because of this our King," orated Anatole, rising to his climax, "when France calls upon us again for aid, upon us, the poet-peasants of Provence, do we not fling aside plowshare and pen, and

leap with one bound to the very forefront of victory? As at Verdun!"

"It was some leap," commented Wally, appreciatively. "What's a *sestina?*"

It pleased m'sieu' to jest, shrugged Anatole; had he not seen m'sieu' himself writing in a book? Doubtless m'sieu' was also a poet. . . . In Provence, these things were in the air: love, poesy, deeds of valor. One had the great Mistral, spiritual descendant of the ancient bards; one had still the Courts of Love held yearly by the Félibres, as in the days of Madame Eleanor of Aquitaine: she whose son Richard, had he not found it necessary to rule the barbarous English, would have become the greatest troubadour of them all, greater than his own minstrel Blondel.

"Do you mean to say that Richard the Lion-Hearted was a *poet?*" inquired Wally.

"Most assuredly," replied Anatole. Was he not of Provençal descent? These things were in the air! . . . I myself, m'sieu'—m'dame," admitted their chauffeur with becoming modesty, "have written in other days my *sestina.*"

"Do you suppose it's anything contagious?" murmured Wally.

To which Anatole responded, delicately: what need to write *sestinas* when m'sieu' was living one?

Whatever was in the air seemed to be bringing renewed health to her invalid, thought Emily; his interest roused; he seemed stronger. Nurse Watkins would doubtless have disagreed with her; but

Nurse Watkins was not there to trouble. And so they wandered pleasantly down through the pleasant land, pausing to rest where they choose; as at the "singing Isle of Avignon," where a hundred chimes still rouse their echoes in the ancient, empty Palace of the Popes; or in a little hostelry on the storied walls of Carcassonne, where bugles wakened them at sunrise and put them to sleep at dark, and Wally lay all day on the ramparts bathed in the soft, mild airs of the Midi, dreaming out over the Languedoc plain, pretending himself a Knight who had come, with his lady attending, and his faithful equerry, to meet other Knights for the start of a Crusade.

Again they stopped awhile at the old robber fastness of Les Baux; strange bleached bones of an ancient citadel that had been prosperous when its lords preyed on the caravans which passed below on the great highroad to Spain; and Anatole told them that the first Lord of Baux had been one of the three Magi who followed a certain star into Bethlehem. That was why, he assured them, a star was still visible, graved in the stone over their defaced castle gate; and still, when one of that family is to die or to be born, a strange star would appear hanging low in the heavens over the ruined tower.

"But it is quite true, m'sieu'—m'dame! I myself have an uncle who had once a cousin whose aunt had seen such a star hanging over the tower of Baux!"

Anatole was giving Emily a Europe quite new to her, one she had only vaguely sensed behind the constant round of spas and casinos, of fashion and

intrigue and pseudo-gayety and all that busy idleness which her father had made his life career. To Wally it was a happy dream, a dream that had lost its sense of loneliness; with waking moments of simple pleasure, as when they stopped by the wayside to quench their thirst with melons of Cavaillon or with a glass of the fragrant Mouscat' wine, while Anatole delivered sonorous thanks and compliments, in the liquid Provençal that makes of poetry so natural a speech. Always at such moments the boy's eyes sought Emily, as one pinches oneself to be sure a thing is real; and she was always there. So he slipped back happily into his dream again.

And all the time an attendant Presence shadowed them with kindly wings, keeping at a distance such lesser, uglier presences as have to do with life: fear, and regret, and anxiety for a morrow which never comes.

Once the boy roused from his dreaming long enough to be a little troubled.

"Look here, Emily! Have you thought what people might be saying about your coming off with me like this? Those tabbies round the hotel verandas—won't they talk about you?"

"Oh, impossible," she said demurely. Impossible, she thought, for them to think of anything more to say! Besides, had they two not a romantic precedent for their adventure, a precedent so classic as to be almost respectable—George Sand rescuing the young Chopin?

But Wally was not satisfied. He frowned over

the idea of Chopin and Madame Sand. "Virtuous people are so rotten-minded," he said. "Perhaps, since you seem to have missed out on Sir Harry, you'd better marry me, after all? I'm not much of a prospect personally, of course, but there's uncle. He's pretty sure to do the proper thing by you."

"Wally," she asked rather anxiously, "would you *like* me to marry you?"

"I wouldn't mind at all," was the polite reply. "But it's not myself I'm thinking of; it's you. I don't like the idea of your running round loose all over the place. Better a bird in the hand, perhaps, than a baronet in the bush."

She gave a relieved chuckle. "Your gallantry, my dear, does credit to the nation! But I'm not so sure that a life interest in an uncle is negotiable property. And besides I've a prejudice—the proud spirit of a Weldon, ha!—against entering any family unbeknownst. It's like slipping into a house by the back door. We'll discuss it later. But meanwhile let's leave me as I am: a decorative combination of secretary and nurse."

She failed to tell him that since her appearance did not convincingly suggest either, she had thought best to register them at the hotels as "Mr. and Mrs. Wallace." When you burn your bridges behind you, she thought, you may as well make a handsome bonfire. The idea had come from the tactful Anatole, who since the beginning of their wanderings had ceased to call her "mademoiselle," and addressed his patrons collectively and respectfully as

"m'sieu'—m'dame." It was a situation to appeal naturally to the delicacy of any Provençal.

Wally, apparently content with her decision, seemed to have gone to sleep; but not so deeply that he did not presently make an acute observation: "I know why you can't make up your mind to marry people, Emily; neither me nor the Englishman, nor any of us. It's that Basque chap, the one who didn't find you good enough—damn his nerve! You're waiting for Esteban. Aren't you?"

The girl gave an abrupt laugh. "What rot!"

"And quite right, too," he continued as if she had not spoken. "Go on waiting—who knows?" he murmured, slyly: "perhaps you'll improve with age?"

"Is it your pretty thought that I entice him away from his present consort?" asked Emily. "He's not that sort, old dear. Basques are virtuous, painfully so. And faithful—my word!"

"Exactly," said Wally.

"Or am I perhaps to do away with Stancia, who happens to be particularly healthy"—she pursued—"by means of poison or the stiletto? I'm not a lady novelist, unfortunately, to manage it with the stroke of a pen. . . . No, Wally dear; even if there were no Stancia—Esteban does not want me now."

The boy replied with closed eyes, "Oh, yes, he does! He couldn't help himself."

She gave him a quick, rather nervous look at that. But she was mistaken: Wally had fallen asleep again, quite contentedly.

One day, as they neared the mountains whose cooling breath falls upon the plain before their shadow, Emily asked the boy a question:

"Wally, what do you believe in, if anything?"

"You," he said promptly.

It brought the unexpected tears aching into her throat—there were not too many people in the world who believed in Emily Weldon. But she kept the tears, as usual, out of eyes and voice.

"Better no gods than false ones," she said, oracularly. "Aside from me, haven't you some preferences?"

"You mean am I a Christian? I don't know," he said cautiously. "What do Christians do?"

"Pray, chiefly, I fancy."

"Then I'm not," declared Wally, "I was never one to ask for things that aren't offered. Why the catechism?"

Because Anatole, it seemed, had an idea. He knew a place called Lourdes in the neighborhood, which was very good for sick people.

"Another cure?" groaned Wally; he had tried so many.

But Lourdes, Emily explained, was not a sanitarium; just a sort of shrine where there were miracles.

"Miracles are for Roman Catholics," objected Wally. "And I'm not a Roman Catholic."

Neither was God, perhaps, exclusively, suggested Emily with some diffidence. Talk of such matters always seemed to her a little indelicate; but ap-

parently it was customary with invalids. At least, she thought, it might be interesting to see a miracle; and think how it would gratify Anatole!

"Right-o!" agreed Wally; as he would have agreed had Emily suggested a little sight-seeing expedition to the moon.

So they went to Lourdes.

It was an experience the girl remembered all her life, in nightmares: crowds of the maimed, the halt, the blind, in litters and wheel chairs, waited upon by ladies of great families who counted it a privilege to attend them; pilgrims from every quarter of the world, Bretons in winged caps and embroidered aprons, kneeling beside Africans with matted hair; Spaniards in mantillas, long-robed Indians, tourists with Baedekers; all telling their beads in unison, while a procession of priests passed following the Host, censers swinging, chanting a robust chorus that was taken up magnificently by thousands of voices. Then a sudden hush fell, through which an old Archbishop in full canonicals shouted feeble prayers into a megaphone, and was answered by the populace in one great wailing cry for help.

Walking beside Wally's chair, with Anatole on the other side, the girl followed the crowds toward the grotto where the miraculous statue stands, half hidden by votive offerings of wreaths, candles, crutches, wooden legs—Emily saw on that altar, and saw without smiling, a set of discarded teeth. A tremendous gust of prayer came out to them like a rushing wind, and Wally started and clutched

nervously at her hand; but Anatole moved on; the tears pouring down his cheeks, muttering a steady stream of Hail Marys. And presently Emily found herself praying, too; if it could be called a prayer:

"Our Lady in Heaven, I hope you won't think I'm intruding where I certainly don't belong; but you can see why I've come, can't you? Do what you can for this poor boy, there's a dear! . . ."

Somewhere in her memory lingered a not inappropriate bit of verse:

"He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well—"

She rather suspected that she might have been more successful with God Himself than with his Lady Mother.

The faces about her began to stand out individually, eager and desperate with hope, some of them merely curious, some strangely alight as with an inner vision. One in particular stirred her deeply: a girl of her own age, far gone in fever, eyes staring, lips parted with the effort to breathe, who muttered ceaselessly in English as her litter passed: "Lord, I believe—Help Thou my unbelief! Lord, I believe—Help Thou my unbelief!"

When a sharp little rain came up, Emily opened her parasol over this girl, since the attention would have embarrassed Wally. As she stood behind her, wanting to speak, wanting to say some word of encouragement, the muttering ceased; and attendants came quickly to cover the litter with a white cloth.

"Let's get out of this! I can't stand any more," she whispered to Wally; but his face was strange

to her, curiously exalted and still, the eyes half-closed.

"Wally!" she cried in sudden fright.

"It's all right," he answered, quite strongly and clearly. "It's going to be all right!" He seemed to be speaking in his sleep.

Anatole, tremulous with delight, rushed off to buy more candles. A miracle! What had he told m'sieu'—m'dame? Undoubtedly m'sieu' was about to recover at once in answer to his prayer!

But the boy did not explain that it was another sort of miracle he had prayed for: not his own health, only for the safety of his friend Emily.

After that they made straight for the Pyrenees. The girl had known all along where they were going. The memory often came to her with a touch of healing, that should be healing, for Wally, too, of a green, quiet valley in the upper ranges, full of sun and the south wind, down which a stream of melted snow rushed foaming past the garden of a little inn fragrant with acacia and the scent of bee-hives, tranquil as only mountain hamlets are tranquil before they have been discovered by the world's sick.

It was Esteban's village, near the old hacienda of the Urruty. How they must despise her now, the Urruty!—Esteban's father, Pedro, the fat Béarnaise wife, the little grave Bette, the grandmother herself, whose respect Emily would have valued, for some reason, above that of any woman she had known. She had meant never in life, never even in dreams,

to revisit this country of Esteban's; and here she was, returning to it with another man. The girl, for all her faults, did not lack courage.

By the time they reached the shadow of the Canigou, guarding the eastern gate of the Pyrenees as La Rhune guards the west, Wally's false strength had left him. He was too weak to care when the gray roofs of the Catalans gave way to the red of the Basque country, and the soft-slipping French of the plains to brief monosyllables bristling with r's, if Anatole paused for direction. In vain Emily eagerly pointed out to him the *béret* worn in place of the flopping tam-o'-shanter, the *espadrilles* instead of the clumsy sabots, the tall whitewashed houses growing farther and farther apart; for Basques have not the gregarious French dread of solitude. And presently Emily herself ceased to take her rather painful pleasure in these reminders, but sat watching Wally, saying now and again to Anatole, "Faster! Can't you go faster?"

The big car went whirling at last along the narrow passes like a cyclone, so that the peasants, hearing it afar off, crossed themselves angrily, and ran to drive their live stock out of the road.

But when they came to the valley Emily had once described to him, musical with rushing water and little bells, Wally seemed to know where they were.

"At last!" he murmured; conscious of the kindly strength of woman's arms that helped Anatole lift him from the car. They were the arms of the patronne of the inn, Madame Pantchika, who lost

her shy surliness at once when she saw what had to be seen.

"*Tiens!* It is no longer a man, this one. It is a *pauvre petit gars!*" she said softly to Emily; who knew that she had been wise to bring him there.

Much excitement was in the village over this impending arrival. Americans, not merely to eat and hurry on, but to remain indefinitely! engaging Madame Pantchika's three rooms, her salon and *terrasse* as well; and at such price as she chose to name!

"But they are mad, these people!—mad with gold"—and indeed Emily had rather a royal way of spending other people's money.

It had been too much for the patronne; she laid the matter before the priest, not daring to trust her own honesty.

"Why derange yourself?" shrugged the curé. "You know our saying, 'If God made mountains, it is that man may not cross them.' Since these people have no mountains of their own, they must pay well for the privilege of enjoying ours." And he named a price at least half as high as they would have paid in any other inn of Europe.

But when Pantchika saw the condition of her guest, she reduced the price by another third, and sent word in haste to the Urruty household. One of her guests, said the message, was after all no stranger, was indeed an enemy, having been at one time turned from the Urruty door. But the other guest could be turned from no door, because he was in mortal need; and what was Pantchika to do?

So it happened that Emily, gazing with eyes which ached up the long valley where she had once driven with Esteban to his home, saw a figure she recognized descending it: a picturesque old figure in thimble-shaped cap and voluminous black *capuchon,* riding a horse sidewise, with a pannier of fresh eggs over one arm and a trussed fowl tied to her saddlebow. It was Madame Urruty; who put aside the explanatory Pantchika at the door and came straight to where Emily waited, in dread.

But her face was not stern as the girl remembered it; there was a friendly look in its gravity, almost a welcome. "So! You have returned to us? And not alone? That is well. A wife's place is naturally at the side of her husband, particularly if he is ill."

Emily felt rather shaky with the relief of it. "Oh, but, madame, he is so very ill! He does not even know me now!"

"*Peste,* what of that? Fatigue is weakening to the wits. Let him rest. You have done well to come to us, my child. Here with our sun, and the wind from the south, and the help of *le bon Dieu* and myself, he will recover, if it is humanly possible."

She went out on the *terrasse* where Wally lay, past speech or caring. Emily heard her giving quiet orders there, to the patronne, to the anxious Anatole. The head of the cot was to be lifted, so; the fowl she had brought was to be boiled down to one strong cup of broth, one only; she herself would prepare a *tisane* of herbs for the fever. The very sound of

her voice was heartening; a matriarchate has its value.

But when she returned to Emily, she said only, "It is not humanly possible"—and opened wide her arms; the instinctive gesture of old motherhood, the gesture of Christ crucified. Emily went into them and wept.

There was still much happiness left for the two friends, however; a twilight sort of happiness that brought its own peace. The south wind held. People came and went around them in shy, friendly fashion, speaking patois or broken English that made Wally smile. "Like a Scotchman trying to speak American with a Georgia accent!" he said.

From his terrace he took quite an active vicarious part in the village life; exchanging compliments with Pantchika as she fished out of her back windows for his morning trout; flipping pennies to the children who played *à la queue* endlessly in the street, grave little crop-haired boys and girls dressed alike in tight-sleeved full black aprons; never tiring of the daily *pelota* match in the *frontón* that was the center of the village.

Once there was some saint's festival, and all the houses hung fresh crosses of flowers or leaves above the lintel, and at night the mountain sides were beautiful, far and near, with beacon fires. After the moon rose, there was dancing in the square; at first such dancing as one might find anywhere else in Europe, the tango, the one step, with the young men and girls lither and lighter on their feet because of

much walking the mountain paths in their light canvas sandals. But later, with the singing and the drinking of new wine, the spirit of other days revived, and soon they were dancing, young and old alike, the *Saut Basque*, the *farandole;* couples facing each other, never touching yet never separating, each movement identical, playing out the ancient young drama which is the story of all dance; pursuit, spurning, and at last capitulation.

"You should be dancing with them, Emily," murmured the boy, wistfully. "You and Esteban—perhaps I shall see you dancing so one day." He was wandering again, she thought; he was often a little light-headed.

But the *pelota* was his favorite entertainment, especially when the curé played; a stout old fellow with cassock well tucked up about his legs, wielding a very active *chistera.*

"That's what I call a priest!" declared Wally. "A vast improvement on the sort you see in Italy sometimes, lolling about on donkeys several sizes too small for 'em. You wouldn't mind saying 'Father' to a man like that!"

Once, learning that the cider with which the public players were refreshed between games was supplied at the expense of the village, Emily conceived the idea of sending Anatole out with a special offering of wine; "in slight return for the pleasure their beautiful game had given guests from a far country," she bade him say. Emily, when she chose, had very pretty manners.

The result was repaying. The village beamed with grateful approval. Monsieur le Curé came at once to visit them, remarking brusquely that although as heretics they were not entitled to the ministrations of religion, doubtless they were all the more in need of them. Other notables of the community followed suit: the notary, quite a man of the world, who had once been to Monte Carlo; the doctor, offering in an unprofessional capacity certain native medicaments which did no good, but which Wally faithfully tried —"Can't have these chaps outdoing Uncle Sam in politeness!" he explained. The blacksmith, who had served as alcalde before Pedro Urruty, a man of evident importance, who played, Pantchika told them, the finest *pelota*, both *blaid* and *rebot*, in the valleys. He had been the teacher, she added, of Esteban Urruty himself. Wally encouraged her to tell him what she could of this Esteban Urruty; nodding now and then over what he heard, well content.

Gifts poured in upon them, often from strangers: combs of the delicious Pyrenean honey, little earthen jars of cordial, pats of fresh butter laid in cresses. "I had no idea," said the girl once, in Pantchika's hearing, "that people could be so kind!"

"That is because one beautiful and rich, like madame, has never before known the need of kindness," said the patronne, simply; and Emily smiled. But for once her smile had not its little edge of irony. She seemed to be losing, she thought, her sense of humor.

Once, with Pedro Urruty, a younger man came who brushed Emily's hand with a polite mustache, in the French fashion, and whose clothes, while very shabby, had the unmistakable mark of a good tailor. Pedro introduced him merely as Monsieur le Comte. He made himself very interesting on the subject of the Basques; Emily wished Miss Dibbs were there to hear him.

"Some historians think them the ancient Iberian race which was native to this peninsula; others believe them descended from the inhabitants of the lost continent of Atlantis; still others ally them with the Celts, the Phœnicians, the Mongols. But Basques themselves will tell you"—he gave a deprecating shrug—"that they are the original inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, speaking the language of Adam himself. It is true that our speech, Euskara, seems allied with no other known. Tubal, fifth son of Japheth, son of Noah, is said to have settled in this country before the establishment of the Tower of Babel, which accounts for the purity of the tongue. These are doubtless matters in which monsieur"—with a courteous inclination toward Wally—"being of the younger generation, has little credence. Tubal, however, is a favorite name in our families, if that proves anything. It happens to be my own."

He told them other odd things: that there are no words for modern implements in the Basque tongue, that the language has suffered practically no change in thirty centuries, and that no one not of

Basque blood has ever been known to learn more than a few phrases of it.

"The Euskara," he added, "is really less a language than a race memory, perhaps, an instinct of the heart."

Afterward, Emily asked Pantchika something about this gentleman, whose title had caught her attention. She had not known there were titles among the Basques.

The patronne shrugged. The father of monsieur was French, of Normandy, or possibly of Burgundy —*n'importe:* his mother was Etcheverray, so that naturally he was called here by her name. Naturally, too, when he tired of other lands he had returned to the *Pays Basque.* Also, she added practically, the decline of the franc was of less importance here than elsewhere.

"But picture to yourself, madame!—he keeps no cow, no fowls, not so much as a pig. His servant must buy in the market everything! And over much of his house there is no roof; only where the books are—hundreds, thousands of books!" This poor monsieur was, in her opinion, *un peu fou.* "I ask myself—is it possible to eat a book, to wear a book, to marry a book, and give birth to other books?"

"That, yes," said Emily dryly. "Too possible!"

Pantchika crossed herself. It savored strongly of witchcraft, of which there had already been much among these Etcheverray—sorcery, magic, book study of all sorts. And to what end? There were no more sons! The Etcheverray, it appeared, once

as powerful as the Urruty, were one of those families *qui mont en graine;* they no longer cultivated their lands, they even sold them!

Emily recognized the type; even in her own new country, she remarked, there were families which "went to seed" because of too long ease of living, too much war, perhaps too many books. Her father had occasionally attributed the proud spirit of a Weldon to what he liked to call the Old Southern Stock. Emily felt a certain bond of sympathy with the shabby, scholarly Etcheverray who was so evidently in exile here; until she learned, some time later, that he was quite a famous person, the acknowledged authority on Basques in the world.

It was through Pedro Urruty, Esteban's father, that she discovered the uses of the neighbor, the *chenhango,* who in Basque communities is expected to perform all manner of friendly offices in the way of arranging marriages, births, deaths, all the important affairs of life. Pedro Urruty had apparently appointed himself their *chenhango,* and came daily to see that all was well with them: a courteous, shy gentleman, with the quiet dignity of a Spanish grandee, though he wore customarily the broad sash and very full short black blouse of the peasant. Through him the matriarch kept them under a watchful eye, advising, directing, and where necessary commanding: the girl had long since ceased to resent her beneficient interference.

But as once before, this unexpected kindness began to arouse in her uncomfortably something for which

she had hitherto found small use: a conscience. More and more she disliked the knowledge that these people's interest, their growing friendliness, was based upon a lie.

Emily rarely lied, unless she found it necessary: not always then. One day without premeditation she told Madame Urruty the truth: young Wallace was not her husband; she had never had a husband. Her pretence of being a divorced woman was sheer panic at the thought of having to marry Esteban and lead the life of a Pyrenean peasant-wife.

The old woman's eyes never wavered from her during this confession. Once they gleamed angrily; once they showed a faint flicker of amusement. The matriarch was not unappreciative of courage, even at her own expense.

"So!" she said, when the brief statement was finished. "Now we must persuade this rash young man to make things proper for you before he dies, eh?"

Emily, flushing, explained that Wally was quite willing to marry her, had indeed offered to do so; but that she felt any such excitement would be bad for him. Moreover, there was the matter of the rich uncle: haltingly she managed to make clear her reluctance to entering a family, as it were, by the back door.

It was an idea that seemed to interest Madame Urruty. "So?" she said again, and nodded, twice. "So!" Then, to Emily's great astonishment, she drew the worn old wedding ring off her own finger

and slipped it upon Emily's, remarking simply, "We will not speak of this to others, *gatchutcha*. It is not well that ignorant persons know too much."

"Gatchutcha" was the little name Esteban had sometimes used for her. . . .

Some days later, the matriarch arrived at an unusually early hour, driving a pair of mules to a two-wheeled, white-hooded *tartane* like a Roman wine cart, a small girl beside her, sitting very upright and important. It was the first time Esteban's little sister Bette had come to see her.

"I wish," said the old woman carelessly, "to use your servant Anatole and your traveling automobile, since it is necessary for me to go out into the world, as far as to Bayonne. Bette will remain to take the servant's place for the day; she makes herself useful." Emily's instinct told her that to borrow something from her was the greatest compliment the matriarch could pay.

Bette, it appeared, had brought for the poor m'sieu' who was ill a *cadeau*, a little gift; she produced a very small yellow chicken.

"This one is not, ma'm'selle comprehends, a chicken for the pot?" she explained, anxiously. It was an orphan, the tragic remnant of a thunderstorm, educated personally by Bette. *"Regardez, ma'm'selle!*— Speak, speak, my little one," she said to the chicken, who feebly chirped in response. "Hop, hop, *mon enfant!*" The chicken hopped. "Is it not sage?" demanded Bette with pardonable pride. "One sees it is not a chicken to be boiled!"

Certainly not, agreed Emily; it should remain while in their hands entirely a *poulet-de-compagnie.*

Wally appreciated the chicken-of-company very much indeed, and allowed it to speak and hop freely over his person; while Bette disappeared and reappeared at intervals bearing food, with the regularity of clockwork.

"The bouillon of m'sieu'."

"Regard m'sieu's dish of clotted cream with honey."

"We have now the two pullet's eggs beaten in *Yzarra.*"

"It is time for the *tisane,* to be taken at thirteen hours and a half precisely."

Nor did it occur to Wally, despite a fastidious invalid's appetite, to decline these ministrations. Emily, recognizing in small Bette the master mind, permitted herself a little rest; the boy had been so sleepless the night before that she had not left him. She was grateful for Bette; grateful for Madame Urruty, whose errand into the world, she learned, was to bring back from the convent near Bayonne a certain nursing-sister, one Sœur Marie-Josef, well known in the valleys; a doctor, explained Pantchika, being of little value in cases so serious, since he was but a man.

Presently Emily, as she slept, become conscious of anxious hands tugging at her, a frightened little voice in her ear: if ma'm'selle would waken, if she would come quickly, oh, but quickly! Something had occurred to m'sieu' who was ill. He swallowed

nothing, he no longer enjoyed the *poulet-de-compagnie.* Bette had fear!

Emily, running, saw that something had indeed occurred to Wally; his eyes rolled up so that one saw the whites; his jaw dropped. . . . The doctor was in the room soon, the priest, many neighbors; Pantchika lamenting as she chafed the feet of the poor *petit gars,* Bette whimpering like any ordinary little girl while she came and went, according to orders, with food that was not wanted. . . . And then at last the matriarch, putting them all sternly out of the room; and with her a quiet, quick-moving woman in a blue habit, a crucifix at her belt; with deft sure hands which knew what they were doing.

What relief! Emily at that moment would have welcomed even Nurse Watkins.

It was almost dawn when she looked up gratefully from her knees beside the bed into the nursing-sister's face; and saw that it was Stancia.

They said what they had to say in whispers, over the boy's relaxed body.

"You—! You are not married to him, then? To Esteban?"

A faint surprise stirred in the other's still eyes: no more. Married? To Esteban? Ah, no. Mademoiselle, being heretic, did not perhaps know that it was forbidden a man to marry his brother's widow, his spiritual sister? True, she admitted—and her lips quivered once—there had been some talk of a special dispensation, since she had no children: the Urruty were a family of importance. But

la madre had decided otherwise; she preferred for her grandson a wife more suited to maintain his position in the world than a woman of their valleys. And Esteban, she added stolidly, had himself preferred this, on further thought.

"He—has gone to America?" whispered Emily, trembling.

The other shrugged. One did not know. One knew only that he had been forbidden to return again to the *etcheonda* without such a wife as his grandmother would find suitable.

"Religious," added Sœur Marie-Josef quietly, "do not as a rule discuss these worldly matters. It is forbidden by the Superior."

But Emily declined to take the hint. "Oh, my dear!" she whispered, forgetting for the moment her own grief in another's. "Oh, Stancia, how terrible for you! How terrible!"

The Sister of Mercy lifted quiet eyebrows. There was nothing terrible, she said, remotely. On the contrary, one had one's vocation, one's work; a work for which her previous experiences had preëminently fitted her. And now, if mademoiselle cared to rest a little? . . .

Some time afterward Emily was called again, and saw that Wally had become conscious; saw, too, for the first time, that he was really dying. She had known it for so long that she had not realized it.

"No, no!" she begged him frantically. "Don't go! Not now, Wally boy, not yet! Stay for me! I want you, I need you so!"

"Not any more, old thing," he whispered, his fingers curling like a sleepy child's around her hand. The miracle had not failed him.

Unnoted, the chicken-of-company chirped and hopped about his pillow. Sister Marie-Josef lifted high her crucifix. At the door of the house the patronne, weeping, presently lighted a handful of straw, as is the peasant custom where death passes, that a soul may rise to heaven the more easily on a puff of smoke.

Emily presently went wandering again, with Anatole and the car and Miss Dibbs; who came to her at once, asking no questions, all her romantic instincts aroused by the plight of this gallant girl who had thrown away Stoke Norbury for a young lover, and now had lost the young lover as well.

Suzanne also proffered maternal support, shocked though she was by her stepdaughter's amazing *faux pas*. "How rash of you, darling, how positively indiscreet!" she wrote. "Everybody is talking about it, laughing at poor dear Sir Harry. I am the last person to blame you for following your heart's dictates, dearest, you know that; but I do think you might have considered Sir Harry's feelings a little? We've had the most dreadful time, Armand and I, consoling him." Apparently they had succeeded, since the baronet was returning with them to Biarritz.

Wally's uncle had arrived with incredible despatch to dispose of his few affairs. Not only the automo-

bile and Anatole were settled upon Emily, but also the very comfortable little income which had been Wally's.

"We pay our debts," said the uncle crisply, in response to Emily's astonished protest. "You gave the boy the one thing we couldn't buy for him. Too bad you didn't marry him into the bargain!" He eyed her shrewdly and kindly. "Don't tell me he didn't want it. I know better. The lad was human, I hope!"

So they would not credit her with this one friend, she thought bitterly, even in death! But she was glad not to have to give up Anatole and the car; glad, too, that she was able now to permit herself the luxury of spinsterhood, if she chose.

She did not wander very far from the Pyrenean valleys; because of Wally, she told herself, lying there alone among strangers. But there were other reasons. Had Esteban heard—? Was it too late? Had he found already the suitable wife he had been sent to find; or would the matriarch tell him—what? What could an old woman find to tell her grandson that would change the look which had been in his eyes as they parted, of distaste, or weary disillusionment!

She gave up at last counting on Madame Urruty. Echoes of her stepmother's sordid little philosophy shamed her: "A woman's a fool to wait for any man to come back to her: men aren't that way!" If Esteban were coming, he would have come before this.

Weeks passed into months; the summer died, though a wooing south wind still tempted roses to linger in sheltered places. The carts and wagons were piled high with russet fern for the winter's stabling, and on the galleries of the tall Basque houses golden pumpkins dried in the sun. These gave to Emily a touch of unexpected nostalgia for the country of her childhood, for dusty golden-rod along the roads, and sumac branches, and the smell everywhere of burning leaves. Strange, she thought, how in sorrow the heart returns to the familiar things of childhood, little as they are valued at the time.

She brought Miss Dibbs back into the *Pays Basque* to open the spinster's house in Saint-Jean-de-Luz for the coming season. Emily did not mean to stay on with her; the place was too poignant with memories, too near to Biarritz and Suzanne. She knew now that Esteban would not come; had given him up more completely than when she believed him married. Indifference was, in her experience, a far greater barrier than marriage. It was through no wish to follow him that she had decided at last to go back to America. There perhaps she might find root-hold, make new root-hold; Wally had taught her that there are men in America, loyal, faithful men, to be trusted.

Yet still she lingered; found herself often standing on the promontory near the great light that gives the little harbor its name, gazing, like many another woman before her, out to sea for a boat that never came. And, as do many people who hide a secret

trouble, she grew fanciful. She liked to speak to the natives in the few phrases she had learned of Euskara in the valley. Sometimes they answered quite simply, as if she were one of them; and the surprising thing was that she understood. Could it be, as Etcheverray had suggested, less a language than an instinct, an instinct of the heart? She recalled with a stab of pain the strange sensation she had known of being at home in the Urruty house, because it was to be the home of Esteban's children.

Some admirer began to leave odd little gifts on her doorstep, baskets of silver fish laid on cresses, the graceful native cornucopias of fruit and flowers. Unknown admirers were not a unique experience, for Emily's pale loveliness was of the type that often touches the passing fancy to romance. But she liked to think that these naïve offerings, coming from Esteban's people, came almost from himself.

Once at dusk, as she sat dreaming by the window of Miss Dibbs' lamplit salon, a sound that was hardly more than a whisper of music came up from the dark garden below. Was this her fancy, too?

"Dibby darling," she murmured, "I wonder if you are hearing what I hear?"

The spinster looked up from her book and listened. "Ah, a *basauflûte!*—the lovers are out. Hardly the season for *basauflûtes*, either, with not even the tamarisk yet in bloom."

The girl leaned from the window to hear better. . . . "My dear," the music whispered to her

memory, "do you not know that if you will not come to me, I must come to you, always?"

She saw by the light of the rising moon that another boat had entered the harbor since morning, a quite large boat, not a fishing craft; perhaps one of the season's yachts, over from Biarritz. She looked again, beginning to tremble.

It was Esteban Urruty's boat, the *Gathid*.

FÊTE-DIEU

CHAPTER THREE

FÊTE-DIEU: a celebration in which the dog Nagarro has his part

BETTE was suffering the pangs of the *femme incomprise;* not only because hers was the age at which one does suffer them, but because she had reason. Misunderstanding, injustice —these things are hard to bear, particularly hard for a Basque to bear. She sat in the pigpen, after the fashion of Job, fondling a shoat—there is something consolatory in the touching of small nuzzling creatures; and reflecting upon the hollowness of her world, considered exchanging it for a better one. Not that of heaven; judging by the accounts of Monsieur le Curé, who ought to know, heaven sounded rather dull; but that, for example, of her charming new sister-in-law: Paris, England, the Americas.

A far cry from a Pyrenean pigpen to Paris, perhaps; but there was nothing in so ambitious a fancy to daunt any young Urruty, child as she was of a world-faring people. At a certain age, if one happens to be Urruty, one roves; only hitherto the more notable of the family rovers had not been hampered by petticoats.

Bette deposited the shoat in the mire whence it came, pleased with the resulting condition of her

own petticoats, usually immaculate. She would go dirty all day, she thought, dirty as a boy. Who was to care?

"Adieu, my friend," she said to the shoat gloomily. "Amuse yourself to the most possible; soon you will become ham like your ancestors. As for me, *il faut voyager.*"

It was the Fête-Dieu. In all the valleys, in all the world, doubtless, there was not another Christian beside herself who failed on this day to celebrate the feast day of God. Even in the village nobody was at home, except infants too young to know what they were missing, and very ancient folk, like Damasa, their *aïeta-anna,* who were too old to care. Not that Damasa was really *aïeta-anna* to the house: their only true grandmother was the matriarch herself, a lady of quite different kidney; but since ancient cousins must be well cared for, and since every decent household has its *aïeta-anna* to help with the babies and tend the fire and mind the house when people are busy, they had Damasa.

The crone nodded in the chimney corner over a fire she had built as soon as the matriarch was out of the way—Madame Urruty was not one to encourage the extravagance of fires in June. She looked very much like a witch-wife, with her familiar, the cat Gathid, dozing languidly on the settle beside her. She had stuck a sprig of fennel in the keyhole to keep out Trufadec and such other demons as might seize the occasion to be abroad, as they are so apt to be on a day of festival. Damasa knew a

great deal about the ways of devils. Her intimate accounts of them filled Bette and the other children with a fearful pleasure. But today Bette was not in the mood for being pleased.

She roamed about restlessly, free to do what she liked; too free. On this day there were no duties: food was not cooked; clothing was not washed; the mules grazed; the plow oxen idled in luxury; there were no pleasant, busy sounds of labor anywhere. The very house had an unfamiliar air, since Esteban's marriage.

All the long months of his honeymoon, while the lovers wandered the world hand in hand, doubtless seeing nothing at all but each other, workmen under the eye of Esteban's grandmother had been making things more suitable for Esteban's bride. "More suitable indeed!" muttered Bette's mother angrily. What was this Emily, then—a royalty? A queen of the aborigines?

But Bette suspected that her mother secretly admired Emily as much as any of them, with the pathetic admiration of the hopelessly fat for the exquisitely slim.

The child paused at the door of the *salha,* somewhat awed by its appearance. No place, this, to desecrate with muddy sabots! It would not know itself, the *salha;* no longer a big, bare entry hall where farm implements were stored and harvest dances held on occasion. The stone threshing-floor, where the old men of the farm used to thresh out the grain with flails, was covered with skins of

beasts, tigers, leopards, bears, sent home by Esteban from wherever he had happened to kill them; the walls were hidden by faded tapestries and velvets out of *la madre's* marriage chests; over the great hooded chimney, smoked by many a roasting sheep or hog for the harvest feasts, hung a painting so dim one could not be sure what it was about. Bette herself saw nothing desirable in this picture except the frame; but *la madre* valued it, as a keepsake doubtless, because it had once been painted for the house by a guest named Velasquez.

Furnishings had been brought to the *salha* from other rooms: tall carven chairs like thrones, high-backed settles, Spanish chests and *armoires* rich in brilliant color, with much gold. From the stair rail and the high blackened rafters fluttered faded, tattered banners of glory under which the men of that house had fought, from the time of the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa to the late engagement at Verdun. There was also an American flag, in compliment to Emily; the idea of Esteban's father.

Undoubtedly the *salha* was impressive; Bette wondered just why. There was nothing new or really *chic* in the room, except the portrait of Emily in her wedding array, white and lovely; and even this would have been improved, considered Bette, by the presentment of Esteban seated beside her, in full evening dress, with his bride's hand resting upon his shoulder.

Upstairs one had changes also: hand basins in each room, cunningly fitted out with water that ran hot

and cold; marble tubs so elegant as to make bathing almost a pleasure; a bridal apartment done in the *mode Américaine,* flowered paper on the walls, mirrors on hinges, chairs that rocked like cradles, a magnificent bed of brass that shone like gold. Esteban had sent for these furnishings to the city of New York itself, to be sure they were correct.

But the cobbled courtyard was altered most of all. Gone the fine rich pile of rotting manure; no ducks disported themselves in the drainage pool; chickens were no longer free to roam, with now and then the company of an adventurous hog. Only *la madre's* gayly painted beehouses were left, beneath a nectarine tree escaliered against the south wall; since bees do not like to be moved. Striped awnings of red and orange now shaded the place, basket chairs and tables stood about, iron benches, pepper trees and oleanders in tubs, palms, birds in cages; the drainage pool itself blossomed with exotic water lilies sent by Esteban from the Argentine. The courtyard looked, to Bette's dazzled eyes, as elegant as the *terrasse* of the hotel at Biarritz, visited on her one excursion into the world at the time of Esteban's marriage.

And that is exactly what Emily said of it herself. The changes were a surprise for her; Bette had escorted her first of all to the transformed courtyard.

"Oh, oh, but I wouldn't know the place!" she had gasped. "It might as well be the palm room of a resort hotel!"

Not only Bette detected the disappointment in her tone. Esteban's face fell.

"I thought it would be pleasant for you, my Emilie? I thought it would seem more like home?"

The wife of Esteban always knew what to say to him. She put a quick little hand up against his cheek. "*Like* home? But my dearest, it *is* home!"

What did they matter then, a few extraneous awnings and brass beds and tubs of oleander? . . .

The little girl sighed with reminiscent sentiment. How it was pleasant, she thought, to love like that! It made one warm in the bosom to think of the way they gazed at each other, those two, so that often they forgot people were about, and fell silent in the midst of conversation, and presently wandered off together, hand in hand, to be alone; while *la madre* and her son Pedro exchanged amused smiles, and Bette's mother bridled, muttering that such conduct was really *un peu trop*.

Bette, suddenly quite lonesome at the thought, sought the company of her friend Nagarro, at ease like the rest of the world upon his doorstone, yet with an ear cocked as always for danger: passing gypsies, an occasional char-a-banc of tourists roaring by, *cagots* who came to beg—those queer misshapen creatures who need no longer whine their old Biblical warning, "Unclean, unclean!" since leprosy had been abolished in the Pyrenees by order of the Holy Father; and also, perhaps, by the cleansing, healing winds which blow out of Africa and the Bay of Biscay.

Madame Urruty pitied *cagots*, as became a Christian, and gave them work in her cork forests in the

next valley; but everybody avoided them still as in the days before their isolation was abolished by papal decree, and since they associated and intermarried with none but each other, they became with each generation queerer and duller in the wits, and more than ever like the ugly, twisted cork trees among which they lived. Bette shared Nagarro's acute distaste for *cagots*.

With the *gitanos* it was different—a swarthy, handsome, gayly colored folk, wandering the ways of the earth en route to the yearly meeting place of all gypsies, at Tarascon in the Midi. Bette crossed herself at sight of them, as was the custom; nevertheless, she always ran to the gate to watch these evil ones pass; and they, recognizing her there, would call out softly, "Are you ready to come with us this year, little *gorgio?*" Then Nagarro, sensing temptation perhaps, would rush to the rescue, roaring after them down the road like a fussy old lion. But the gypsies would only laugh back at Bette; they who could charm the fish, and cause the milch cows to go on strike by a whispered word—what fear had they of a mere dog?

It was perhaps as well that no *gitanos* passed on the road that day, with invitations.

The little girl sighed aloud. At the moment, the grand procession would be approaching the Place, doubtless; prominent citizens leading, in antique costumes and droll false faces; mountebanks leaping and gamboling about to the glory of God; the musicians playing all at once, in different keys, but how

stirringly! Then the priest, or possibly it would be a bishop, striding along under a canopy borne aloft by little scarlet acolytes who looked very important; next, the *pelotaris* who were to play in the tournament, all in white linen with scarlet sashes, her own father and brother among them. Last, led by a plump-limbed angel in pink tarletan who was in private life the mayor's daughter, the town's medieval Dragon, from which it had been relieved by miraculous intervention; preserved in *papier-mâché*, belching forth red fire, teetering past on six boys hidden in its interior who were its legs. One no longer quite believed in the Dragon, as in early youth; but it still had power to awe.

Bette pictured the midday repast which *tout le monde* would share out of baskets, on little tables crowded into the *place;* while Esteban with Emily on his arm proudly made the promenade to show off his new wife; exquisite as always in a pale green sheath of silk like a flower, with a long green coat to match, and on her head a close-fitting little cloche of green like the cap of a flower bud. And how charming she would make herself to everyone, that Emily!—coquetting demurely with the old gentlemen, curtseying respectfully to their wives, teasing the shy boys, and being so sweet to all the envious young girls that Bette's heart gave a throb of jealousy.

Then, while *tout le monde* digested comfortably, with toothpicks, the pastorale would occur, done by the maskers; all the virtuous characters to the right

dressed in blue, all the villains to the left in red, which made everything so comprehensible; playing perhaps Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers, or some other *chanson de geste* as pleasantly familiar—Basques do not care for surprises in their entertainment.

And then at last, with fanfare of horns and beating of drums, the moment of the day, the *pelota!* Bette dared not dwell upon it—the most important tournament of years, not only the champion Urruty playing (which of itself constituted an occasion) but his father Pedro, alcalde of the district and one-armed as he was, who had been challenged to combat by a gentleman from another canton, also one-armed since the war. So that for weeks past farm work had been neglected, while Urruty *père* practiced at the village *frontón*, under instruction from the blacksmith and later from Urruty *fils*, who had cut short his honeymoon and hurried home in order to coach his parent for this great sporting event.

And Bette not there to see! Did it bear thinking of?

She hurried her mind on to the dancing, which would begin with dark; the mayor leading in the dignified *carrica dantza*, with perhaps her mother as partner—for Fancine was still, as the saying goes, light on the foot though heavy on the knee. Soon the whole place would be giddy with whirling, swaying couples, young and old, snapping the fingers, clapping the hands, Emily and Esteban the most graceful of them all.

And at the last, and best, the singing—ah, the singing! Bette loved music with all the starved passion of those who cannot make it; languorous *seguidillas* from across the border, with the throbbing accompaniment that sounds like the throbbing of hearts; stirring war ballads out of Navarre; native shepherd *complaintes*, ERREGE JAN, The Captive Bird, all the wistful ancient melodies of an ancient people; and for finale, standing all together, the men uncovered, the women holding hands, the *Guernakako Arbola*, the Holy Tree of Liberty, that fine expression of a race to which for centuries Basques have marked to death or victory.

Bette rarely ventured to sing alone, people laughed at her; but under cover of a hundred, five hundred voices, how her own little treble rose and soared! . . . like the braying of a glad young mule in the spring pastures. And as they sang, a proud remembering smile would touch her grandmother's lips, and tears would roll unheeded down the cheek of Pedro, her soldier father, who thought of all the others, brothers, sons, his neighbors, who had lately marched behind him, singing so, out of the loved hills to which they would nevermore return.

Fête-Dieu, one of the great meeting days of her people, dead and living; and Bette not there to sing! For she had been found unworthy. The Urruty household, for the first time in history, harbored a thief.

Freebooting and cattle raiding were not unknown among them, to be sure; one of Bette's ancestors was

lieutenant to that renowned corsair and pirate, Michel the Basque; and even at the present day, the name was fairly familiar to certain unsympathetic officials who imprison *maledetta* for smuggling contraband. But that, pointed out Madame Urruty sternly, was another affair. Risk was involved, men took as they gave, staked their lives on a gamble. It was not as if they had, like Bette, been trusted, and had failed of their trust. Who, reasonably inquired Madame Urruty, would expect to trust smugglers and pirates?

At this point Bette detected an uncontrollable twitch of amusement about the lips of her sister-in-law. So, unfortunately, did her grandmother.

"One sees no occasion for levity," the old lady remarked with dignity. "America is apparently a nation which smirks! As for you, my child, you will retire to your *prie-Dieu*, where, after saying the rosary five times upright on your knees—upright, if you please—you will decide your own penance."

Bette gave a moan of dismay. No one, not even Monsieur le Curé, could devise such soul-searching punishments for herself as conscientious Bette. It was a gift, a matter of the imagination. Bette was wasted upon an age which had no Inquisition.

Emily, out of sympathy, made wordless suggestions with her lips: "Do without candy! . . . Give away your new hair ribbons!"

But the conscience of Bette was one that scorned half-measures.

"Since one is guilty of so serious a crime," she

quavered, "doubtless the penance should be also of the most serious?"

Doubtless, agreed her grandmother.

So Bette, having consulted her *prie-Dieu*, returned to them with the stoic announcement that she would not accompany the family on the morrow to the Fête-Dieu.

Even her grandmother was unprepared for the magnitude of this penalty.

"It is a holiday, *petite!* There will be nobody on the place. For so young a girl to be left alone in a house all day is hardly *comme il faut.*"

She would be not quite alone, reminded Bette. There was Nagarro; there was also the *aïeta-anna*, for Damasa was too old now to attend any holiday except the pardon of St. Blaise, where she took hairs from the tails of all the household animals to be burned against witchcraft.

La madre found herself with nothing more to say, and so Bette, without tears, saw her family depart early in the morning for the distant market town; did not weep even when Esteban and Emily, who left much later than the others because of their fast automobile, begged her to reconsider the matter and go with them.

"God will comprehend," said her brother seriously, "that we have here a family affair, which needs your countenance. How shall we distinguish ourselves at the game, we Urruty, without a familiar voice to cry at critical moments, *'Vas-y, Steban! Vite, vite, mon petit papa!'*?"

But Emily advised her husband not to meddle in affairs of the conscience; it was not for such as he.

She promised to bring Bette in honor of the Fête-Dieu the finest doll to be found in the booths; perhaps one of the American sort called Kewpie, very much in demand that season, attired simply in a face veil with dots?

"Myself," commented Bette dubiously. "I should prefer a *type bébé*, of an appearance more discreet."

Emily agreed with her that a more discreet type of *bébé* might be on the whole more satisfactory.

Yet this was the sister-in-law, this serious, understanding, altogether *simpática* Emily, to whom Bette had done the great injury. It was the property of Emily, no less, which she had deliberately stolen and presented to the gypsies! What had got into her, then?

Doubtless Trufadec, thought Bette with gloomy resignation. One had neglected of late to put fennel in the window crack (since Emily did not believe in devils); and doubtless that fiend of every mischief had seized the occasion to enter into the house, to enter into Bette herself—Bette, who only the Easter before had made her first communion! . . .

The cause of all her misery lay at ease in the courtyard, tied and muzzled, but supporting these indignities casually, as if he well knew them to be temporary. At intervals he padded lithely up and down the length of his long rope like the young wolf he looked, slim, elegant, decidedly a dog of the world, *ennuyé* with his surroundings. No won-

der clumsy, woolly old Nagarro had bristled to his tail at sight of this distinguished stranger, biding his time!

Naturally one could not attack a creature that was tied and muzzled, at one's mercy; but when Emily, deceived by the older dog's meek, sheeplike appearance, loosed her own dog for a little promenade, Nagarro saw his opportunity.

Never was such a battle as raged through the courtyard, the passageway, the very *salha* itself; all in the most vicious, deadly silence, not a snarl or a growl, only the panting of the great furious beasts at their death grapple, and now and then a strange little fierce cry from the child Bette, as if she were at the *pelota* court or the bullfight. "*Vas-y*, Nagarro! *Alors, saisez-le donc! Tues-le!*"

Emily, exhausted with futile efforts to separate them, was too breathless, too horrified to scream. It was Bette who, seeing the old dog down on his back at last, with the other guzzling near and nearer to the unprotected throat, let out suddenly a yell such as only a Basque child can utter, and seized a knife.

The household came hurrying to that yell of desperation, and Esteban got the dogs apart, at the cost of torn clothing and a lacerated hand, refusing the knife Bette thrust upon him.

"Kill the new dog? But why? He has proven himself master here, he should be Nagarro in the old one's place!"

And this in the very presence of his friend of years,

who had been his own trusted herd dog during Esteban's apprenticeship with the flocks!

Doubtless her kind brother would not have spoken so harshly, but that at the moment Emily, sick at the sight of so much blood, had quietly fainted away.

"A fine Basquaise she makes, this one!" Bette's mother was heard to comment, as Esteban bore his wife up the stairs in his arms. "Such a companion for an *homme galant, nèst-ce-pas?* To faint over a little dog blood! I ask myself, what must be her conduct at the arena! Eh, mon Pedro?"

"In America they are not yet civilized enough for the bullfight, my angel," replied Bette's father; but the child felt that even his loyalty to his son's bride was somewhat shaken. Basques do not admire timidity.

Esteban himself looked rather annoyed when he returned to them a little later.

"What an affair of nothing!" he muttered to his father, laughing. "These women! She wishes now to bandage up my hand until I could not wield a *chistera!*"

It was not the first time Emily had so disgraced herself of late. Once, when Esteban had found it necessary to gentle with spurs a young Arab stallion who tried to unseat him by biting at his legs, Emily, catching sight of the performance through her window, had screamed in terror, so that the startled beast reared and nearly fell upon Esteban. The matriarch rebuked her sternly.

Emily bit her lip, flushing. "Something seems to

be getting my nerve," she admitted lightly. "Can it be the effect of true love?"

Doubtless, agreed Madame Urruty; love was very deranging: "*N'importe*, it will pass. You know our saying, 'After marriage a woman, like a *gave*, becomes tranquil.'"

Bette sometimes found herself a little sorry for the *belle-sœur*. She tried so hard to be a true Basquaise; to take interest in the affairs of the farm, the ménage, although Esteban had engaged some daughters of the tenant farmer, the *metayer*, to help his grandmother with these. She never tired, the delicate, pretty creature, of stories of great Basque women who had fought beside their men against the Saracens, against the invading armies of Charlemagne, before the *Pays Basque* allowed part of itself to become French. She had tears in the eyes over the story of the little maid of Gavarnie who deliberately walked off a precipice to mislead and destroy the spies who followed her to discover the hiding place of her father, wanted by the law. Most of all she thrilled, this fragile Emily, to the legend of Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre (and therefore part Basque) who gave birth to her royal son, Henry the Fourth, while calmly singing her *Notre Dame du bout du pont*. . . since when there are to be found on many bridges shrines for the encouragement of pregnant women.

Yes, Bette often felt pity for the new sister, who so aspired to be Basque and yet who could not bear even the sight of suffering.

But her brother, in marrying this gentle alien—had he not set his feet to the following of strange gods? To suggest a foreigner, a dog who understood no Euskara, as Nagarro for their house!—a post of honor handed down among their own dogs from generation to generation.

When the present Nagarro became too old for his duties, his son Olivier would naturally be taken from the herding to succeed him, just as he himself had left the herds in middle age to succeed his wise old father, Pompon—woolly, yellow-white, innocent of appearance, all of them, as their own sheep; until they were angered, when they became terrible as lions. The Urruty dogs, indeed, were as well known through the valleys as the Urruty men, and for much the same qualities of courage, sagacity, loyalty to the death. And it was this line of trusted servitors and guardians which Esteban, her brother, wished to replace with imported sheep dogs out of Belgium! Sheep dogs indeed!—this one who had never seen a sheep, perhaps, unless in carcase form, hanging outside a *boucherie!*

Providence—or was it Trufadec?—suggested a course of action. Emily, who had seen enough of dog fights, entrusted Bette to exercise her pet. Bette, accepting the trust, promptly led the handsome creature down the road to where some passing gypsies were encamped, and offered it to them in free gift, on condition that they at once leave the neighborhood.

The *chal* to whom she spoke laughed slyly. "So,

the little *gorgio* turns dog thief, eh, and wishes it to appear that the Romany are guilty?"

Bette admitted that this was so.

He laughed again. "The little *gorgio* will make a good Queen for our tribe one day! Will you come?"

Bette thanked them politely, and took to her heels and ran from the impending honor.

But after all her crime was wasted effort, for though she waited all day until the gypsies were well on their way to Tarascon, conscience had forced her confession at last; and retribution soon overtook the gypsies in Esteban's fast automobile, and Emily's pet was reinstated. It was merely a question of time now before the enemies met again on the field of honor, with inevitable consequences; for Bette had to admit to her secret self that the Belgian was, as dogs go, the better animal.

Sitting side by side on the doorstone, Bette and Nagarro discussed the matter gravely; which is to say that Bette discussed and the other agreed, always a satisfactory arrangement. It saw itself that no foreign dog could be permitted to assume such importance in a household, without protest. "But if in the course of protest, you permit yourself to be killed —then where are you?"

Where indeed? repeated the candid, anxious eyes of Nagarro.

It might be best, thought Bette—the idea formulating as she spoke, after the way of ideas—to retire while retiring was possible; to relieve for a while

his son Olivier, now with Nacio in the far pastures, while the younger and stronger dog took his place *chez famille.*

"And then what a species of battle we shall see!" cried Bette fiercely, her eyes snapping at the picture. Olivier, fresh from the guarding of mules and cattle, from the conquest, doubtless, of innumerable wild beasts, turned loose upon this favorite of salons, this languid lounger upon cushions! "Regard him there, where he sits like a Christian making his toilette. *Dieu,* he will need to make his toilette then! . . . What do you say, *mon cher:* will you be content to go again to the herding?"

The old dog's tail beat the flagstones. What a life it had been! . . . To sleep out under the stars again, far and free, a young master's body huddling close for warmth; ear alert for rain, for thunder, nose wrinkling to the hint of snow or of peril that prowls by night; making now and again the rounds of the trusting creatures in one's care to reassure oneself—a very different affair from nosing silly hens and hogs out of the highroad, seizing children's skirts to keep them out of the fire, barking at shadows since there was nothing else to attack! True, one gained with the years a certain stiffness, a certain shortness of the breath—but no matter. There were still the nose and the heart—what need has a dog of more?—the nose keen to smell danger, the heart brave to dare it. Yes, Nagarro was content to go again to the herding.

"*Allons!*" said Bette.

Old Damasa awoke suddenly, inquired, "*Hein*, what mischief is it you two plot together?" and slept again, after the disconcerting fashion of the aged.

On tiptoe Bette made her preparations, exchanged her sabots for light rope-soled sandals of canvas, selected a *makhila* of her father's, a strong staff with an iron point for climbing and a knife screwed into the handle for defense; put into a little pannier some food for herself and a packet of chocolates for Nacio, who loved sweets. Last she threw over one shoulder the thick rain-proof cape of wool without which no Pyrenean ventures far afield.

The *aïeta-anna* did not wake again as child and dog slipped past the open door. Only the cat lifted a languid eyelid, and remarked in feline fashion, "So, *mon brave*, you desert your post to seek safety in high places? What wisdom!"

The dog growled some rude answer; they had long been intimate enemies, those two.

But the cat's gibe lingered, perhaps, for when he reached the farthest gate, Nagarro declined to go farther. In vain Bette commanded, cajoled, stamped her foot.

"Do you not see it is for you we go, stupid? Nacio cannot spare us Olivier unless you are there to take his place! Species of a mule, what have you?"

Nagarro hung his head, but did not stir. He remembered the helpless old crone nodding over the fire, the yard full of fowls, the pigsty of pigs, the pastures of resting mules and oxen and timid mares, the empty, unlocked house—all, all entrusted to his

sole care, in the absence of the family. One was not for nothing a dog of the Urruty!

"Then very well!" cried Bette, half weeping. "I go alone! and when I shall return, God knows. Perhaps I shall stay forever in the hills and be a herd girl. Perhaps I shall climb on and on and on, until I come to Paris, to the sea, to the Americas—who can say? While you remain, imitation of a sheep that you are, to become annihilated by the imitation of a wolf! But as you will, that is your pleasure—traitor!"

Nagarro stood a long time gazing after her, remembering the far pastures, and the lusty, lost days of his young doghood. She knew in her heart he was no traitor.

By the time she had reached the gate of their neighbor, Etcheverray, Bette regretted her rashness. But she was not of the stuff which easily turns back. Besides, she needed the help of Nacio to rescue Nagarro from his impending doom.

She glanced into the courtyard wistfully—perhaps Monsieur le Comte would prevent her forcibly from running away, as become a proper neighbor? But monsieur was as usual deep in his writing, at a table under the shade of a bougainvillea vine, where he could watch the mountains. Bette often wondered what he saw in those familiar mountains which others did not see.

Rusted gates of iron lace hung awry at the posts of his courtyard, upon whose tops stood two defaced stone griffins bearing coats of arms. From the courtyard itself great doors, always ajar, led into a *salle*

des gardes which had no roof; and from the watch-tower—for this was one of the *chastels* built in other days by the *infançon*, the lesser nobles, to guard the approach to every important pass—grew a wild rose tree in full bloom. Like their own, the courtyard boasted no pile of manure nor wandering pigs and fowls; but it was because Monsieur le Comte did not afford himself such luxuries. Only a tumble-down old vehicle was there, the cabriolet in which madame his mother used to drive weekly to mass behind a pair of elderly mules, and which now served as roosting place for Manuelo's pigeons. Monsieur Le Comte lived with his servant Manuelo in the kitchen wing, where his many books were safely roofed by thatch, but he was usually to be found writing or reading out under the bougainvillea vine; a slender, sun-browned, handsome gentleman, still far too young, thought Bette maturely, to be so indifferent to pleasure.

"*Bonjour*, monsieur neighbor," she said to him. "You do not then celebrate the Fête-Dieu?"

"Only vicariously, *chere mademoiselle* Bette," he replied in his polite absent way, as if to a grown person who was not really there. "I have sent my servant Manuelo, who will see far more than I should, and describe it far more amusingly. Which saves trouble."

"And he has left you, I see, only a demi-liter of red wine and a bit of cheese for your dinner," remarked Bette severely. "You should eat more

wholesomely, Monsieur le Comte! It is the talk of the village, your thinness."

"'With little, have we but peace, it is enough,'" he smiled, quoting a saying of the people; rather aptly, for as Bette well knew, while his mother lived the life of this poor gentleman was far from peaceful. An ambitious, disappointed, quarrelsome old woman, who needed grandchildren.

"I shall ask my grandmother to scold your servant Manuelo, who is too lazy to cook," said Bette, still lingering. "*Au 'voir, m'sieu'.*"

"*A bientôt, m'am'selle! et bien merci,*" replied the comte absently; but a smile lingered around his lips as the little girl, committed to her adventure, passed on. It was good to hear about his echoing, empty walls the voice of a child again, of a child woman.

Nagarro, dozing once more at his post, lifted his nose from his paws and sniffed, suspiciously. At the same moment old Damasa stirred, she had become with age so like the animals she lived among that she shared their instincts. She hobbled to the door and looked about her. "*Hé, hé,*" she chuckled maliciously to herself. "They will play no *pelota* this day!"

The sky was clear, the air hot and still; too still. Magpies made themselves extremely active, but their chatter only accentuated the growing hush.

"Bette! *aïe*, Bette?" quavered the old woman crossly. It was Bette's duty to look after the poultry, not hers; but seeing that the child did not appear,

the old creature hobbled out on her two sticks and shut up the fowls herself, as if it were already evening. When she returned, the cat had disappeared; gone doubtless to join her fellow devils on La Rhune, where trouble was brewing.

Nagarro made his rounds importantly, giving certain instructions to Margot, the old sow, seeing to it that cattle stood with tails to the west, that the nervous brood mares and their young were together down in the shelter of the ravine. He returned to the door and stood in thought, snuffing. At last he entered the courtyard, where his enemy paced languidly to and fro at the end of a long rope. This is the conversation which Damasa reported as having taken place between them, Damasa who was so old that she understood the talk of animals better than that of Christians; and if she did not speak truth, how then did it happen that the strange dog was found on the doorstone afterward, in Nagarro's place, with his rope chewed in two, although still closely muzzled?

"Monsieur," said Nagarro, brusquely. "I regret that necessity compels me to request you, a stranger, to take charge of my household for a while until I return. Duty calls me elsewhere."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to oblige you, my dear fellow," replied the other. "But you can see for yourself how cramped one is by these indignities which have been put upon me. In an emergency I should, I fear, be of little service."

"Humph!" muttered Nagarro. "For the muzzle I can do nothing, but as to this trifle of rope—one moment, if you please."

Some determined nibbling from his sharp, strong teeth, and the rope parted. The last Damasa saw of Nagarro was his vanishing tail, streaming out behind him like that of a racing horse, as he dashed across the hillside, nose to earth, in the direction of the forest where the *cagots* lived.

Damasa was right: that Fête-Dieu knew no *pelota*. Even during the masque there sounded a faint, dull detonation as of distant cannon, and the actors forgot their lines. In the Pyrenees people do not disregard a thunderstorm. Still the sun shone brilliantly in an innocent blue sky. Then La Rhune began to discharge soft little puffs of smoke, as if it were itself a cannon. Church bells suddenly clanged out. By that time, the celebrants of the festival were scattering to their homes in haste.

Even before the first hint of storm, however, Emily had made an odd request of her husband. "Esteban, I am so very tired! Would it be possible for me to go home now?"

He smiled tenderly. It always thrilled him when she spoke of the rough old house of his forefathers as home. But she would support the fatigue awhile longer, surely? She had forgotten perhaps that he was to play in the tournament?

"No, no, of course not. You know how I love to see you play, Esteban! And your father, too—I hate to miss that! But I seem to be very nervous

today. Let Anatole drive me, will you? and you come afterward with the others?"

Esteban frowned. These whims and fancies! . . . Did he do well to humor them always, as his father advised? Fatigue was, after all, no illness; he knew well the rare physical strength, the trained endurance, that underlay her delicate bloom of beauty—this little creature who could dance the night out, go swimming at sunrise, and be ready for a day on the tennis courts. People, his people, must not think he had married a pampered, self-indulged *type Américaine!*

"Emilie of my heart," he suggested gravely and gently, "with us it is not considered quite *comme il faut* so to exhibit weakness."

It was his first reproof of her, and Emily winced. But at that moment the rain came, and settled everything. Soon church bells were sounding a harsh tocsin from every steeple in the ranges; to ward off the thunder devils, old Damasa would have said; to warn the world certainly of what proved to be the most disastrous storm in years. It came with a roar.

Past crops laid waste, trees that tottered and fell as one looked, modest *gaves* turned into roaring torrents; past barnyards littered with dead poultry, with bodies of lambs and pigs and even calves, Esteban drove his car at a steady sixty miles an hour; while his grandmother urged him to go faster, and his wife sat silent beside him, white and shivering. The great limousine rocked to the impact of the

wind; its windows cracked under the pounding hail; Anatole, the chauffeur, being French and emotional, prayed aloud at the sharper curves.

But Madame Urruty, who usually preferred a more leisurely manner of conveyance—why hurry when there is no haste?—appreciated at times the value of modern inventions. She thought of her fat goslings, the new litter of pigs, the weanling calves, above all the high-strung brood mares—for she was from the Spanish side of the Pays Basque, where horses are taken seriously—all at the mercy of the storm, left to the care of one little girl and a daft old woman who was no better than nothing at all. She was *bien serieuse* certainly, the little Bette; far more capable than her own mother, or than this charming, useless young bride from America; but one needs a steady head and long experience to cope with the emergency of a thunderstorm.

And when they arrived, behold, there was no Bette! There was even no Nagarro; only the strange dog in Nagarro's place mounting guard, obliging but indifferent. Where could they be?

Damasa, nodding mysteriously in the direction of the reverberating, flashing hills, murmured, *"En haut!"* No, they had not gone together; the devils had come first to take away the little Bette, Nagarro, no doubt, was following; dogs are foolish in that way. It was then she repeated the conversation she had overheard between Nagarro and the strange dog. But grown people never listened long to old Damasa.

Esteban and his grandmother stared at each other.

Premature dusk had gathered; rain fell in heavy sheets, harder and harder; hail like great pebbles bounded along the slates of the roof. A child out on the hills, in this!

For the first time Emily saw the old woman's lips tremble. She beat herself on the breast, muttering under her breath, "*Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*"

But she was the first to recover. Another danger had occurred to her. What did Damasa mean by the devils coming for Bette? The old wife's talk was not always foolish.

"Esteban, the *gitanos!*" she exclaimed suddenly. "You were polite, you were careful not to offend them when you went to recover your dog?"

"I, careful? I told them that if their tribe was seen again in this valley, my father would have them imprisoned. It is possible that offended them!"

"Quite possible," agreed his grandmother dryly. "And so they have returned to take in place of the dog your little sister. Ah, *mon fils, mon fils!* when will you learn to listen to the old? How often have I warned you never to anger a *gitano?*"

Esteban paled. "But, *madre mia,* we cannot be sure—?"

"No! I now go to make sure. I shall take the automobile—quick, your purse and some pistols!—while you arouse the neighborhood, get men out into the hills. If she is not with the *gitanos,* God help you to find her soon!"

Esteban obeyed, as a soldier does his superior officer. Muffling himself in a shepherd's cape, he

thrust a flask of brandy into his pocket, seized a *makhila* and a coil of rope, caught up a lantern. Neither Urruty in their emergency thought of Emily, Emily the outsider; who leaned against the wall feeling very queer, wondering if she were again about to disgrace herself by fainting. "I cannot faint, I will not!" she muttered to herself; it was not *comme il faut* to exhibit weakness. . . .

The servant Anatole, chauffeur, valet, and on occasion guardian, called Esteban's attention to her appearance.

"M'sieu' thinks it well to leave madame *toute seule* at such a time?" he suggested delicately. The rest of the household would not return from the fête until very late: storms cannot last forever, and there was sure to be at least the dancing, which no Basque will miss unless he must.

Esteban ran to his wife, and put his arms about her. "What is it, my heart? You are not really ill? You are only frightened? A little nervous again?"

"Yes; only a little nervous again," she said steadily, pushing him from her. She must not think of herself; she must think only of the lost child, grave, honest, adoring little Bette, her friend. "Go, Esteban, go quickly! Do not trouble about me. I shall not be quite alone—there is the *aïeta-anna*. Only find Bette!"

"Assuredly," admonished Madame Urruty sharply from the door, "this is no time for marital solicitude!"

She was gone, back into the storm, and Esteban

after her, at the run. Emily was alone with only the company of a crazed old witch-wife, alone in a strange, ancient house that creaked and trembled to the repeated buffets of the tempest like a straining ship; the house that was to be the home of Esteban's children. . . .

At his gate Esteban encountered their neighbor Etcheverray, no longer absent-minded, beating his way down anxiously through the storm to see whether his little visitor had returned in safety. Through him, the brother learned that Bette had last been seen going across toward the valley of the cork trees.

"Console yourself, Urruty; doubtless she has taken shelter there in one of the *cagot* huts!"

But as he spoke, the men exchanged uneasy glances. Both knew that the *cagot* huts offered no very safe refuge for a young and unprotected girl.

That, fortunately, was something which had not occurred to Bette herself, some hours earlier; who did not know that there are any places in the world really unsafe for well-behaved little girls who have made their first communion. Even the devils and spirits of old Damasa's conjuring left Bette secretly unmoved; after all, one could always disperse them with the sign of the cross! Bette was of a very practical nature.

She had never before been so far from home alone; she and the other children were free of their own mountain side, up and down, but only within sight and hearing of the hacienda.

Excited, but not at all afraid, she hurried through the queer gray woodland, whose trees, showing dark red scars where bark had been peeled from them, reached down toward her from their hump-shoulders gnarled and twisted arms, to catch her as she passed. *Pfut,* they were in the end only trees! she told herself, not knowing that out of such tortured forests the painter Gustave Doré had made his pictures of the souls in torment, for illustration of the Inferno.

The huts she passed here and there in the wood seemed deserted; doubtless even the *cagots* made festival today. Only at the last and meanest of them, a man came to the door and called to her—what was it he said?

"I have nothing for you today, go in the name of God," she replied politely; it was the customary greeting to *cagots.*

But the man came toward her, grinning. "You are a very pretty little girl to be quite alone," he said familiarly, in the vernacular.

Bette's head went up. Democratic by training and by nature, there were moments when the habit of dominance, of command, asserted itself in any Urruty.

"I am not so small as I look, if you please!" she remarked haughtily, and for some odd reason began to run. Why? This was only a man, like her father, like Monsieur Etcheverray; what then had one to fear?

Glancing over her shoulder, she saw that the *cagot* was running after her, slowly, hideously, as one of

the cork trees might run if it lifted its clumsy roots for a chase. He was a cripple.

Bette felt sudden pity for him. She remembered her little pannier of food: *cagots* were always hungry.

"*Regarde-toi!*" she said, and flung it back to him. He sat down at once on the ground and began to eat.

Bette still hurried, however. She wished to put as much distance as possible quickly between herself and the cork forest. It was good to be on climbing ground again, among trees one knew; silvery beeches, ghostly plane trees, dark, hoary oaks like the Holy Tree itself. Child of the hills, she mounted the steep slope easily at full speed, light and sure as a young goat, using the *makhila* to jump the many small streams and waterfalls which crossed her path. She kept her gaze upward toward the high *col* through which she must pass to reach the far side of the mountain, where Nacio's herds were grazing that season, together with many of the village cattle. A responsible position for a lad of fourteen, with two grown herdsmen under him! Nacio, being so wise, would easily arrange the affair of old Nagarro.

Soon she was above the timber line, in a region more desolate, where enormous rocks lay scattered as if giants might have fought there some gigantic Battle of the Stones. About her feet were myriads of flowers, which Bette would have liked to pick for Esteban's bride, who kept the house full of them; not arranged in neat little stiff bouquets, like other people, but thrust, great masses of them, into com-

mon copper vessels borrowed from the kitchen!—such a droll Emily. But she dared not linger; it was still a good journey to the far pastures.

Sometimes she was startled by wild creatures; a *bouquetin* bounded out of cover and away before her, his antlers spreading wide as the branches of a tree; an *izard* poised a moment on a rock and plunged apparently into space, that graceful small chamois of the Pyrenees, so rare now that the noises of the world begin to penetrate his silent fastnesses. Once she surprised a family of young wild pigs, suckling their dam, a ferocious great beast with tusks like a boar, who sprang to the defense, eyes reddening.

But Bette was the familiar of pigs; she addressed this model parent courteously, praising her young, flattering her as pigs are flattered in any tongue, with pleasant murmurings of "Sooy! Sooy"—so that the fierce creature let her pass, doubtless in sheer astonishment.

The air as she climbed grew hotter, despite the near snow fields; strangely quiet, too, as if the day had paused in its affairs, finger on lip, to listen for something. Bette began to listen, too. Now and again she glanced anxiously toward La Rhune, where at this season of the year Deburria and other spirits of evil frequently amuse themselves by brewing disaster for the early harvest. All at once she felt, rather than heard, the first low rumbling of the storm.

She crossed herself and paused, considering a return to the safe shelter of her neighbor's house. But

through that cork forest again . . . ? She hesitated, and looked back. It was then that she saw the *cagot*, who had all the time been following her.

He climbed slowly, in his ungainly fashion, with lips open as if to utter the ancient cry of his people, "Unclean, unclean!" There was something in the dogged, eager patience of him that paralyzed the child. For the first time in her sheltered existence she knew fear; even, in the depths of latent woman instinct, she knew the reason for her fear.

It was a terrible game they played together, there on the high mountain side that sloped sharply to a precipice: the child running, dodging, doubling about among the huddle of rocks like a desperate hare, the man in slow, uncouth, unwearying pursuit. Thunder sounded near and nearer; lightning stabbed at them; there came a sharp preliminary spurt of rain; but the *cagot* seemed unaware of weather, intent only upon the chase.

Bette was too terrified to pray, too terrified even to whimper. She had played all her life this game of hare-and-hounds with her sisters and brothers, and she was very nimble at it, but her heart pounded strangely, specks danced before her eyes. Once she stumbled. The *cagot* gained on her.

Then she remembered the *makhila* in her hand, the knife blade in its handle. She managed to unscrew it as she ran, but dared not wait until the cripple came closer. She aimed for his leering face, and threw the knife. It missed him by an inch. The *cagot* laughed.

More than once into her panic came the thought of the girl of Gavarnie who had eluded her pursuers by stepping off a precipice. With each desperate feint she darted nearer to the edge; but her courage always failed, always she doubled back again. Once, summoning breath she could ill spare, the child raised her voice in one long, wordless, despairing wail, lost in the thunder, sounding above the beating of the rain no more than the cry of a sea gull going over to the Bay of Biscay. And who was there to hear—Nacio, with the thickness of a mountain between?

She knew by this time that it was no man pursuing her, not even a *cagot*, but the devil himself, Deburria, come to seize her soul; and she had made the sign of the cross at him, and he did not vanish!

So there was nothing for it but to run and dodge, double and run and dodge again, slower now, sobbing and gasping, almost done; while the unnatural darkness grew, and hail began to beat at her with little whips. Run and dodge, double and dodge and run again. . . .

Fast as Nagarro sped, the storm was faster. It was upon him before he reached the valley of the cork forest, confusing him with its noise and its sudden flashing, deadening the scent with rain. Near a certain hut in the forest he lost it entirely, what with the rain and the smell of food recently scattered there. But in his far-off ancestry was a mingling of hunting dog and timber wolf, and Nagarro cast about patiently, eagerly, over and over again,

until he found that which he sought; found also another scent, which caused the hackles to rise the length of his back. He followed the two scents, whining.

Halfway up the mountain side, he paused and listened, then bounded on with renewed speed. He needed no further guidance, the ear was enough. It had caught above the roar of the storm another sound, for which such ears as his are made.

So it was that Bette, at bay, on the very edge of the precipice, her spread hands behind her trying to find support against the slippery surface of rock, her failing gaze fascinated by the hideous gaping face that bent over her, close and closer, was vaguely conscious of a great white shape hurtling out of the lower dusk, silent as death. For a moment she saw them outlined against the lightning, man and dog at the grapple; they disappeared. There was a shriek, long-drawn, descending; the slipping of gravel, the faint thud of stones far, far below. Bette knew no more. She was done.

Some time later the white shape reappeared, struggling up painfully over the edge of the precipice, dragging a broken leg. For Nagarro was by no means done. There was still one of his flock to get into shelter.

The dog had his bearings now; he knew this region. Not far away was a shelving rock with a shallow cavern beneath, which had offered refuge more than once to shepherd and dog and flock itself, surprised in the high pastures. The child lay faint-

ing with exhaustion, beaten by the deluge into insensibility. Nagarro clawed at her with rough paws, licked her face with such an insistent tongue that she roused herself sufficiently to push him away. Delighted, he started ahead, looking back, uttering short little woofs of encouragement. Bette understood; she got to her knees and tried to crawl after him, but only for a little way. Strength failed; she fell again.

The dog barked aloud, urgently. He seized her skirts and worried them, jerked at them till they gave in his teeth. But she did not rise again.

He cast a wistful look toward the cavern. He himself needed protection from the pounding hail, the terrifying bombardment; would have liked a dark and quiet place to lie and lick away the flaming agony of his leg. But the dead weight of the child was too much for him; he also was near exhaustion; and so in the end he stretched himself upon her at full length as he had done for many a lamb in his herding days, covering as much of her as possible with his woolly hide, taking upon his own pain-racked old body the full brunt and fury of the elements. One was not for nothing a dog of the Urruty.

Long afterward, when the rain had ceased and an innocent hint of sunset lingered about the edges of the twilight, to ears deaf even to the call of duty, senses benumbed with pain and stunned by the reverberating cannonade of thunder among rocks, a sound faintly penetrated; the shout of human voices, that familiar *irrezina*, echoing from hill to hill,

which is alike the battle cry and the hunting call of the Pyrenees. Nagarro stirred, remembered: was an old dog never to have rest? Summoning the last of his strength to the effort, he lifted up a quavering voice and answered them, howl for howl.

Etcheverray it was who reached them first, knowing his mountain; followed quickly by Esteban and some of the terrified *cagots*, eager to show their blamelessness. One of the latter, searching the gorge below for the child, had come upon a limp, mangled body which he recognized, but of which he said nothing; the unfortunate learn to keep their own counsel.

Bette by that time was warm and dry, but so drowsy that she did not care to move; the old dog so stiff and spent that he could not stir even his tail. So their neighbor took the little girl in his arms—quite strong arms they were still for one who took no exercise save with the pen—while Nagarro descended the mountain in state, slung like a sheep across the powerful shoulders of his own beloved shepherd.

And in the road below, miraculously, the matriarch was waiting, having learned from signal fires that the child was found, even as she returned from her fruitless pursuit of the gypsies. In isolated neighborhoods news travels fast; people on their way back from the fête learned of the child's disappearance, and many had joined in the search; so that it was a procession of rejoicing, quite a little fête in itself, which followed Esteban's automobile toward the house of the Urruty, for further celebration.

But they found no welcome at the door, only, as before, the strange dog, who kept vigil.

"*Alors,* my Tubal," said Esteban suddenly to his neighbor, "will you accept this animal as souvenir of the occasion? He has his points, but one Nagarro is sufficient for our household—eh, little Bette?"

He was chagrined not to find Emily watching for them, nor even Damasa. Not every day was a child of that house rescued from death!

As they opened the door, however, sounds came to them from above; singing apparently, a queer, hoarse sort of singing, broken with odd little gasps and cries. One made out the words of the Holy Tree of Liberty:

"Guernakaco arbola,
Adoratzen zaitugu,
Arbola santua—"

Then a sharp cry of pain, and running feet; then once again the singing; this time a different tune, a brave little broken air unknown to that country:

"I wish I was in Dixie,
Away, away—
In Dixieland I'd take my stand,
And live and die in Dixie—"

"*What,*" cried Esteban, "*is that?*" He leaped for the stairs.

But quick as he was, the matriarch was before him,

barring the way, her stern old face aglow with sudden pride.

"That, *mon fils*, is the little wife from America, who emulates the example of our Queen Jeanne and gives to the world her son while singing! . . . *Na, na, na,*" she added gently. "Have patience, boy, this is no place for men tonight!"

But for once Esteban paid no heed to his grandmother. He thrust her aside as if he did not see her, and sprang up the stairs three at a time, sobbing.

Bette and Nagarro, no longer the center of the stage, sat forgotten in the kitchen chimney and consoled themselves with delicacies of the season. Nagarro, his leg in a neat splint, trifled with a carcass of young hare, Bette reached at will into a large box of orange peel dipped in bitter chocolate. The day was a bad dream that had passed; or perhaps one of old Damasa's stories.

Both were nodding when Esteban appeared to them, holding rather foolishly a roll of blanket, which wriggled and emitted small dismal sounds. "*Regardez, mes amis,*" he said, in a voice that strove in vain for carelessness, "the doll my Emilie has promised from the fête! It is, she bids me to assure you, a veritable *type bébé.*"

At Bette's squeal of ecstasy, the old dog made a long neck, and sniffed. Then he set himself to a thorough, comprehensive tongue-baptism of the new head of his house, the *etcheco jauna;* and there was none to say him nay.

CHARIVARI

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARIVARI: in which is heard a whisper from the pines

LASTRA, the *cordonnier,* lame though he was, had an advantage over his friend Hermose, the umbrella mender, who possessed not only two stout legs but a donkey on which to see the world. To Lastra the world arrived. As he had been heard to remark, one may with philosophy support life lacking the aid of lawyer, priest, or even midwife; nor is the blacksmith indispensable to those who possess no beasts to shoe. But their feet even the poor have usually with them; and soles of rope or leather, thanks to the dispensation of a merciful Providence, are not immortal. Hence to shoemaker Lastra, as to a spider in its web, came in due time the life of all his neighborhood; and such as did not come of its own accord, he was able to keep an eye upon from behind the door of his *atelier,* the closed lower half of which offered a desirable privacy, while its open upper half supplied an untrammeled vista of *tout le monde* functioning outside.

It was therefore Lastra who found himself able to inform the umbrella mender, who in turn informed the outlying districts, as was his wont, that the House Ducontentia was about to reoccupy itself. Not with the family, naturally; who of the De Maytie were

left with sufficient effrontery to face old neighbors—old Basque neighbors who do not forget?

If, indeed, any of the De Maytie were left to take possession. She who inherited the property had been long dead, doubtless, and had left no progeny, or they would have been heard from. Live people do not leave such a property as the House Ducontentia standing idle for thirty years, at the mercy of wind and weather and a caretaker like the deaf old woman Gerbera.

With that one, questions were a waste of effort; but from the preparations afoot it seemed probable that English had rented the place, even Americans. The shutters, the windows themselves, stood recklessly open. . . . "Ah, *Dieu*, with all those fine furnishings exposed to the air!" groaned passing women. Linen yellow with disuse sunned on the window sills; an unusual smell prevailed of soap and water; and on a certain mild autumn evening, firelight appeared to dance in the windows of at least three rooms simultaneously.

Americans undoubtedly! Who else would so indulge themselves? It was reminiscent of those never-to-be-forgotten days when other Americans—she who was now wife to Esteban Urruty, and the poor sick youth who had at that time been presumably her husband—engaged the entire *fonda*, at Madame Pantchika's own price, for an indefinite period. What a people!

Lastra hopefully predicted another such era of prosperity for the village, and bought on the

strength of it two extra-fine hides. But the blacksmith Olhaiby took a gloomier view; he had turned misanthrope since his son Hercule went out into the world and sent no money back.

"Soon, at this rate, we shall be forced to leave our houses and live like layers in a cake, one family above another." So it was, he said, that people lived *la bas*, his gesture including all the centers of civilization. Why, he demanded, if persons were dissatisfied with their own savage country—and who could blame them?—if they wished to make the sport on *les eskis*, or to promenade the *cirques* on donkey-back, or to bathe themselves in boiling water for purposes of health—why not confine themselves to places set apart for idlers, such as Cauterets, or Aix-les-Thermes, or Bagnères-de-Luchon? Things went better, he grumbled, in the days when Basque *fors* did not permit of more than five strangers at a time in any *bailie*.

Here one had already the bride of Esteban Urruty — "Not that one would wish to have her elsewhere!" admitted the blacksmith, who retained unimpaired his eye for a fine woman—to say nothing of the Comte des Luynes, who was only half Basque, and the present Madame Pedro Urruty, who was of Béarn.

"Which is not to be exactly a stranger!" protested Lastra.

"No, but an inferior certainly; you will admit that?—born as she was outside the valleys!"— And one had even, lying in the *ilerri* with their own sacred

dead, the body of a stranger, the heretic first husband of Madame Emilie.

"Assuredly you do not begrudge Christian burial to that unfortunate, who on occasion offered wine for our *pelota?*" exclaimed the shoemaker, outraged in all his deeper instincts of hospitality.

But Olhaiby begrudged nothing to nobody, he said gloomily. He wished only to point out the fact that for some thirty centuries the Eskual-Herria, on both sides of the mountains, had been for Eskualdunak, and for them only; that while it was very well to bring to the homeland the riches of other countries, their objects of usefulness, even their wives, when it came to permitting strangers to take possession of one of the ancestral *domecs—alors!* And then?

The village agreed with Olhaiby, whose skill at the *pelota* naturally gave him authority in all matters. They decided not to be overcordial toward the House Ducontentia, while willing to supply it with essentials, at a price.

But the village had no opportunity to be cordial, nor to supply essentials at a price. What, was presently demanded of Hermose the umbrella mender, did the Urruty themselves make of these foreigners, who acted as proudly as if they were natives; received nobody, went nowhere, not even to the mass; and spent no money in the village? They must be rich; things were constantly coming to them by *carro* from outside; the services of Gerbera as *femme de ménage* were not sufficient—they had brought with

them a black Moorish woman, who spoke some unintelligible gibberish which was neither French nor English, though smattering of both. What did the Urruty think?

Hermose pursed his lips importantly. As professional gossip to the valleys, a cross between wandering minstrel and modern newspaper, it behooved him to speak discreetly. One had the dignity of one's profession, handed down with all its perquisites from generation to generation; he never permitted himself merely to *jaser*. If Hermose said that a thing was thus and so, it was thus and so. But it also behooved his patrons to be careful how they talked on the day umbrellas were mended; for Hermose had the ears of a mole.

He said now that Madame Urruty herself felt no objection to strangers having taken the House Ducontentia: they might better its reputation; they could hardly impair it.

As for the little Madame Emilie—Hermose warmed to his theme—she declared her intention to visit her compatriots whether they wished to be visited or not, if only to determine why not. And her husband had reproved her, remarking that the ladies of his house did not visit the House Ducontentia. And the little American had asked Americanly, "Why?" But naturally her husband did not care to gratify such idle curiosity.

Nevertheless, it was Hermose's impression that Madame Emilie intended to visit the House Ducontentia, and at the earliest opportunity. They were,

she insisted, her compatriots; Juan Smeet being a name well-known in her native land, even perhaps noble, since it appeared that the first of that name had been rescued from death by a native princess, whose family wished to roast him at the stake after an early American custom, but who had yielded to her entreaties and spared him to her. Doubtless, said Hermose, the present Monsieur Juan Smeet was a result of this royal episode, and therefore entitled to a certain aloof hauteur.

But the young man, when next they had opportunity to observe him, seemed less royally haughty than he was shy, with a manner nervous to the point of timidity, and the delicate complexion of a girl. His features, too sensitive for a man, flushed if one stared at him closely, and he addressed nobody of his own accord; not even the shoemaker, leaning over his half door in a receptive attitude. He responded civilly enough to every greeting, but hurried past, always with a sketchbook under his arm.

"*Flûte!* Only another artist," pronounced Pantchika, who had some experience of them.

As for the mother, Madame Juan Smeet, one gained no impression of her at all, with nothing to go upon but a white hand sometimes seen at the window shutter, or the impression of eyes, rather than eyes themselves, gazing out from the dim interior behind elaborate carved grilles.

It was not entirely curiosity which brought Emily to call on these strangers, nor yet entirely hospitality. Americans rarely attracted her; she had not been

playing the American game. But now that there was no longer a game to be played, now that she was sinking roots deep into a beautiful reality, certain hitherto unsuspected sympathies and atavisms awoke in her. Perhaps, she thought, with the domestic virtues one acquired other old-fashioned qualities, such as neighborliness, patriotism.

"At this rate," she warned herself, "I shall presently take to flapping my wings and crowing like an eagle at sight of the Stars and Stripes!" Emily had not as yet familiarized herself with the customs of fowl, wild or domestic.

Possibly she was a trifle homesick, less for the great things than for the little unimportant ones which are so vital: habits of speech and outlook, familiar commonplaces, common memories to share. She had decided for the sake of her child to spend his second winter at the hacienda; except for an occasional jaunt with Esteban out to Pau for the hunting, or to Munich for the opera, or to Paris for the play. There was no city, no spa or resort in the world where a little body could so grow in health and happiness as here among the hills, under the Spartan eye of the matriarch, that wise old mother of many men; and Esteban's delight in her decision repaid her for any small sacrifice it might entail.

Yet now that winter was setting in, and fewer guests came to share the growing fame of the Urruty hospitality; now that motor lorries had ceased for a while to roar along the Route des Pyrénées, and the rustic, simple life of the valleys resumed its ancient

way, Emily found herself sometimes listening—listening for what?—in that age-long winter silence which the natives say is broken by but three sounds: the wind in the pines, the rushing of the torrent, and the passing of the armies of Charlemagne.

It was as pleasant to her as it was surprising to realize that Americans, possible friends, were to spend these shut-in months only a few kilometers distant, in their own village; so that she was the more dismayed to be refused at the door by a negress of the type familiar to her childhood, evidently as eager as Emily herself to see somebody who spoke approximately her own language.

"No, ma'am, honey. It sho is good for sore eyes to see you, but Miz Smith she don't never see nobody no more," sighed the woman plaintively. "She's po'ly in her health. Hit's mighty lonely hereabouts, ain't it? Not so sociable as N'Orleans. . . . Mr. Johnny, he'll be right glad and proud you come."

Probably some neurasthenic old lady taking a rest cure, thought Emily, pitying the son who must humor her. But a glimpse she caught through the closing door of a room beyond did not suggest a neurasthenic old lady. There was a *chaise longue* filled with gayly colored pillows, a piano piled high with music, numerous photographs in silver frames, vases of hothouse flowers. It was certainly not a Basque interior; nor yet entirely American. A subtle and sophisticated fragrance was in the air; not the usual variation of violet or *chypre* affected by her artless

compatriots—Emily's nose was as keen as her other perceptions. This perfume suggested to her experience the *boudoir intime*, the greenroom. She felt that her father would have been able to classify it at once.

The whole effect was oddly out of keeping with the tall, narrow medieval house whose timbered upper stories overhung the street like beetling brows, and whose lintel bore in Basque the grim reminder: "Pause and reflect on your last hour; you will not regret it." Below was the inscription: "Ave Maria! In the year 1600 Joaquin de Maytie built this house to live in with his wife Pilar Bikavioa."

There were several such ancient *domecs* in the village, standing lofty among the humbler houses, each bearing a distinctive personality and a name independent of its owners; the house Elizoaca, where the notary Abbadie lived; the House Arahaïa, in whose lower story Lastra plied his trade, but whose upper stories were still inhabited by its original family, the ladies Olhagarray, who had found no husbands proud enough for them. These were remainders of a more important day, when the village marked the approach to one of the four great passes into Spain. Now there were wider passes. The Sud Express from Toulouse had penerated the mountains at another place. Even the Route des Pyrénées looped back upon itself a few miles away, to avoid the village, thanks to the influence of the Urruty, who owned most of the property thereabout. An occasional char-à-banc of tourists left the great

highway to startle its drowsy Calle Mayor; or some automobilist with a palate, lured by the modest fame of Pantchika's trout, or her wine of Jurançon, or her inimitable *gaufrettes*. But Madame Urruty had saved her village from the desecration of progress.

This point of view intrigued Emily, who once suggested that the Route des Pyrénées might have doubled the value of her property.

"Why double the value of property which is not for sale?" replied the matriarch, tranquilly.

It would have been difficult, indeed, to buy a house in the village or to rent one. None was unoccupied except old Ducontentia, which stood year after year, staring with blind, shuttered eyes down upon the ancient quiet of the little Place, haunted, foreboding, sinister. More than once Emily had questioned her husband about it, or Pedro, or Madame Urruty; but had received no satisfactory reply. She began to realize that it had some history which they considered unsuitable for the ears of a discreet young matron. Their meticulous care for her innocence often touched and amused this daughter of Archibald Weldon, whose sole care for her had been that she saw enough of life to see it whole.

The cobbler Lastra, witnessing from across the street her discomfiture at the hands of the inhospitable strangers, emitted loud, sympathetic clucks of indignation. It occurred to her that Lastra might be less particular in his views as to what was proper for a young matron's ears. She crossed and leaned confidentially over his half door— "Quite," boasted

SHE CROSSED AND LEANED CONFIDENTIALLY OVER HIS HALF DOOR.

the cobbler afterward, "as if she were any person on her way home from the washing tank"—and asked the cobbler what he could tell her about the House Ducontentia.

He could tell her a great deal—who more? Thus it was she learned that this remote, sun-clean, guileless old Eden of the hills had known its serpent, like other Edens; and that the serpant was, as usual, a woman—the lady Pilar de Maytie.

"*Ah, oui,* I was her friend, *moi qui parle*—that is to say, I often spoke with her," he corrected, glancing about hastily to see that his wife was out of earshot. "All men were her friends; she was not proud, that one. And of God's creations, she was assuredly the most exquisite—blond, madame, not in the manner of yourself, cool and white as a camellia blossom, but as our Basquaises and the women of Northern Spain are sometimes blond, with a touch of fire in the eye, the hair; that charming little bloom of gold on cheek and lip—"

"—which in time becomes a charming little beard," murmured Emily.

"*Ah, oui!*" sighed the cobbler with enthusiasm; he had the temperament if not the vocation of a poet. Was there ever, he demanded, a more delightful type than the warm and tawny blonde of the Pyrenees? "And of what a grace! The hands, the hips, the feet—for which I myself made little soft kid sandals with wool embroidery—all moved as if she danced, so that no man, even a *malheureux* like myself, could watch her pass unmoved. Which was

something she knew quite well, coquette that she was, even in infancy. Ah, no, she was not proud, that one! Not proud enough.

"The mother being dead, the father found it easier to let her run wild than to restrain her. 'Ah, bah! Pleasure is in the blood,' he would say. 'She is nothing but a *petite gosse!*' But madame understands that there are *gosses* and *gosses*.

"In carnival season, as you know, it is the custom of our young men to band themselves together, under a *chererro*, and make the *mascarade* from village to village, singing, acting plays, dancing the *mutchikoak*—the goat dance. With them, if you please, chose to go the little Pilar, daughter of the Sieur de Maytie. Naturally, it made a great attraction, and with our young men she was safe enough. But in the *farandole* afterward any stranger was free to take her, no matter who, so long as he was light and tireless upon the feet. How they would snatch her one from the other, the poor, mad, beautiful little creature, and keep her whirling, whirling, light as a leaf on the wind—till some woman who was a mother would interfere. Once a young gypsy fellow who had been following them sprang into the circle and seized her and would have carried her away, quite willingly, had not our young men managed to beat him off.

"When Monsieur de Maytie heard of this he laughed and laughed. 'So, the *gosse* begins to be a woman!' he cried, as if proud of her. But some nights later he found them in his garden, little

Mademoiselle Pilar and her gypsy, whispering and kissing together; her kisses, you understand, were always free as those of a *bébé*. Eh, *la pauvrette!*"

"What did he do?" asked Emily with interest.

"Monsieur de Maytie? Naturally, he killed the gypsy, being a man of choleric habit. It made, of course, great scandal, and the little Pilar was sent away to a convent—"

"But what did they do to the father?" interrupted Emily.

"To him? What would they do?" Lastra shrugged. "It was nobody's affair; money was paid to the *gitanos*, perhaps. The De Maytie," he added irrelevantly, "are cousins to the Urruty. . . . Presently a suitable marriage was arranged with a rich Spanish gentleman old enough to be her grandfather. . . . The Spaniards know how to take care of their wives, *n'est-ce pas?*"

But not always, apparently. Rumors began to come back from San Sebastian, from Monte Carlo, from Paris, from wherever life was most gay and wild and reckless. The Sieur de Maytie ceased to laugh at her escapades; he died of them.

"Though some," added Lastra, "called it an apoplexy, and others"—again he looked about cautiously —"believed that the *gitanos* had put death upon him out of revenge. Certainly, he was found in his garden dead, at the very place where he had surprised the child with her first lover."

Emily shivered. No wonder, she thought, the House Ducontentia wore so sinister a look!

"The next we heard, she had gone upon the stage. Picture to yourself, madame, one of our decent Basque women, of great family, dancing as in an *estaminet* upon the public stage!"

His hearer murmured that she had personally known several women of the stage who managed to retain a certain amount of decency.

"But they were not Basque," replied the shoemaker conclusively. "Ours is not the temperament sufficiently phlegmatic. . . . She would have done well never to return to us. *Là bas*, where so many are wicked, one more or less may pass; but with us, you comprehend, sin is more visible.

"The Spaniard husband never accompanied her here. There were other men; *ah*, *oui*, you may be sure!—women, too, of a sort. Ladies of fashion, in immodest dress, bare arms and bosoms, paint on the mouth, the ear lobes, the finger tips; persons from the stage, eyes rolling, hips rolling—what neighbors for an honest cobbler!" Lastra had evidently enjoyed them very much. "Carriages dashing to and fro at all hours, cavalcades; shouts of laughter coming out of the windows, singing—have I told you the little Pilar sang as exquisitely as she danced? One could not sleep for listening. And cards were played there, as in a casino; not our own honest *muss* or *la manille*, at which one loses no more than a few sous of an evening, but the *rouge-et-noir*, the baccarat. I myself have seen there a table of those little imitations of horses which go round and round, losing a fortune for some *mal-*

heureux at every turn. She never troubled to draw the curtains or to close the shutters, that one! All were as welcome to watch as they were to enter; what is pleasure, she would say, if we do not share it with our friends?

"One saw there frequently not only the *habitués:* monsieur the notary; Pedro Urruty, who was then a widower; the young Etcheverray, Comte des Luynes, who could not keep away, although madame his mother raged like a tigress—but youths from the village, less accustomed to the vices of the world, excited with wine and with other things. The son of Olhaiby the blacksmith, for example—that foolish Hercule—who sat at table with Madame Pilar behind him, leaning her bare arm across his shoulders as she taught him how to play. And he was so dazed by the honor of it, and by the loveliness and the perfume of her, that had she told him to fling his immortal soul upon that table, he would have watched the croupier rake it in with pleasure. When she left, young Olhaiby left also, taking with him all the savings of his mother. One may conceive the sentiments of the Olhaiby toward Madame Pilar!"

Emily asked a question: "But was it Pilar's fault that this young man followed her?"

The cobbler replied severely, "Should she have leaned across his shoulders with the bare arm?" And Emily had to admit that a sleeve might have bettered matters.

"But there, she knew no more of modesty, that one, than a wild bird!" sighed Lastra. "Modesty

is perhaps a thing that must be taught, and who was to teach her? Certainly not that shameless *vieux rossignol,* her father! Early in the morning she would often step out on her balcony yonder to salute the hills—she had a great devotion for our mountains—dressed, if madame will believe me, in nothing save the *chemise de nuit!* Ah, but it was unmistakable—little ruffles at neck and wrist, the hair *décoiffée,* the feet, bare and pink below, for all the world to see. And often, catching my eye upon her—quite by accident, of course—she would call out some pretty foolishness. Once it was 'Ah, my Lastra, so early at your needle? Never mind; in heaven it is you who shall sleep all day, while we others make shoes for your poor feet to dance in.' "

"And what would you reply to the pretty foolishness?"

Emily leaned so confidentially across his door that the cobbler found himself answering out of the heart: "I would reply, 'Good morning, little lovely one. If it were always for your exquisite feet that a man made the *espadrilles,* he would be willing to sew throughout eternity!' "

"Bravo, Monsieur Lastra!" said Emily quite warmly. She felt a curious sympathy for this disarming siren who practiced her friendly wiles on prince and peasant alike, this lost enchantress of an earlier day whose very name made music on the ear; Pilar de Maytie, of the family Bikavioa, of the House Ducontentia. "I can see that your little

lovely one was a somewhat disturbing element in the community, however."

"*N'est-ce pas?*" said the *cordonnier* with feeling. "*C'était son métier!*"

At last, it appeared, even the priest became anxious about the frivolities of the House Ducontentia, although its mistress went regularly enough to the mass. He spoke to her reprovingly.

"He was young then, like we others, and most severe. But she? She called him her charming little conscience, and kissed him on the cheek—conceive the sacrilege, madame! The women in a body complained to the alcalde, who went to remonstrate —and remained to dine. Never, he told us afterward, was such a menu this side of paradise—the alcalde of that time being a person of a certain *goût*, and fat. In the end her conduct became so irregular that there was nothing for it but the charivari."

His listener gave an exclamation. She had heard of this harmless-seeming but most effective punishment meted out to citizens whom Basques find undesirable.

"All one night, the next day, the next, and the next—for nearly a week it lasted, constantly, without a pause. Drums beating, horns blowing, scraping of fiddles out of tune, a donkey to bray when the tail was twisted—never for an instant, day or night, did the noises cease beneath her window. When some tired, others took their place—*ah, oui*, madame, I at last with the rest!" sighed the cobbler apologet-

ically. "At sound of such constant noise one excites oneself, as with wine; it is a sort of frenzy."

At first Pilar had tried to make a jest of it, he said; came to the balcony and bowed elaborately and threw kisses, as from a stage to an audience. When they flung missiles at her—vegetables and bits of mud—she caught them, laughing, and threw them back—threw them straight and hard. "Ah, but what a beautiful *pelota* she would have played had God made but her a boy!"

Once she sent servants out with refreshment, in case her friends wearied in their entertainment—a gallant irony which touched some kindred strain in the woman who heard of it. Once she tried to make them a serious speech; but who would listen?

In the end, the heavy wooden shutters were drawn close, and one heard music issuing from within; careless thumping of the piano, the voice of Pilar, loud and clear—always Pilar, for those with her commenced to have fear.

At last they began to leave her, servants and guests, slipping away one by one through the garden at the back, until at the end she had left only the *bonne* Gerbera, who was too deaf to give heed to the charivari. Madame Pilar came out once more on the balcony opposite, to say good-by.

"But she had changed; *ah, Dieu,* how she had changed!" muttered the cobbler.

Her hands twitched; there were circles beneath the heavy eyes; all the fire had gone out of her for lack of sleep. Yet still she laughed; her gay little

mocking laugh visible rather than audible above the noises of the charivari.

"Adieu, my beloved friends!" she cried; her clear singer's voice suddenly stilling the ugly tumult. "Since a Basque woman no longer finds refuge among her neighbors, I leave you now; though I could have wished for my child to be born in the house of its fathers."

"There was a silence then, believe me! I for one knew shame. But angry women have no shame," muttered Lastra. "The wife of Olhaiby the blacksmith, frantic for her son, cried out, 'Its fathers, eh? How many fathers has it got?' And somebody laughed; and suddenly Madame Pilar put up her hands before her face, and went inside."

Emily shivered again. It was not the first time she had sensed among these clean-living, sturdy people of her adoption an alien harshness, a strain of cruelty—the child Bette's eager interest in a dog fight, for example; Esteban's pitiless indifference toward the sister-in-law who had once tempted him.

She wondered suddenly whether Madame Urruty could have taken part in this charivari, this merciless baiting of another woman. Later she asked.

"But certainly," said the old woman quietly. "One had sons to protect, the sons of neighbors. She was a danger here. It was time she left us."

Emily wondered what had been the end of this tragic young wild thing they had tried too late to cage; this victim of circumstance, who had thought to break the laws of convention and had been, as

always, broken by them. There, she thought suddenly, but for the mercy of Providence, goes Emily Weldon!

"I think you were not so much shocked by Pilar as were other people, *madre?*" she ventured, greatly daring.

The matriarch shrugged. At her age, she admitted, one found it difficult to be shocked by anything; human nature being what it was. "Pilar," she added thoughtfully, "was the daughter of two of my own cousins, who were cousins to each other."

It gave Emily some idea of the close interrelation, the curious solidarity existing among these few great families, shut in together for so many centuries apart from other peoples.

Madame Urruty enlarged upon the theme with a quite modern candor which frequently took her granddaughter-in-law by surprise. "It is our custom, with animals, to introduce at times some new strain of blood; otherwise the breed becomes—how shall I say?—intensified—*un peu trop.* Pilar was like that: *un peu trop.* They would have done well to marry her to her gypsy," she added calmly.

The girl realized why her own marriage with Esteban had met with so little matriarchal opposition. The realization was not too flattering.

"But Pilar deserved punishment," continued the old woman, "if only for what she had done to the Etcheverray. Our poor Tubal!—a specimen of her handiwork. There are no children to that house; it tumbles about the ears; and in the midst of ruin sits

Etcheverray, quite indifferent, drugging himself with books as with an opiate. Books! What a life for a man still young, handsome, strong! It is to be understood that he does not care to love again, out of sentiment; there were in his ancestry jongleurs, troubadours, knights who jousted at the courts of love. *Eh, bien!* But what has sentiment to do with marriage? I myself have selected wives for him—healthy girls of sufficient appearance and intelligence, and suitable dot; but to what avail? 'No, no, my treasured old friend Léocadie!' he will say. 'Let us content ourselves, you and me, with our memories.' Ah, bah! I have a right to my memories, me; they are at least respectable. But that young romantic of forty years, filling his mind with sterile emptiness—absurd!"

Emily, concealing a small smile, asked whether the count had been one of Pilar's lovers.

"But not at all! He was too gentle for Pilar; she would doubtless have preferred the blacksmith's son. Tubal, of course, adored her passionately from the cradle; she was the mode. All the young men—our sons, our nephews—adored her passionately; and Pilar returned their affection—*en masse*, you comprehend. It was a very loving nature. But Tubal was really too young to be taken seriously; the milk was barely dry on his lip. She teased him, played with him as with a puppy; she could never keep her hands off people whom she loved. She kissed him openly—to make others jealous, perhaps. Nevertheless, after the charivari, he swore

before the high altar that he would marry no other woman than Pilar de Maytie, whenever she was free to marry him. It was his punishment to his mother for instigating the charivari."

Emily sensed here a deeper tragedy than that of the blacksmith's son; not the only young man, it appeared, to follow Pilar out of the valleys. Who followed Pilar went far and fast.

"He devoted himself to her service from that moment; comforted her grief when the child was stillborn; attached himself to the household, made himself very useful there, I dare say. The dotard, her husband, was of small protection to her; and Pilar was a woman who needed much protection."

"You mean," asked Emily, puzzled, "that their relations were entirely—platonic?"

The matriarch shrugged. "But naturally! How else could a man of sentiment have accepted the hospitality of the husband? He intended to marry her when the Spaniard died; but that one was slow in dying; *vieillard* husbands of beautiful young wives are tenacious of life, *n'est-ce pas?* And meanwhile she made increasing fame upon the stage; and later we heard she had accepted some other admirer. *Le pauvre Tubal!* It was years before he had the courage to return to us; and as you see him now—broken in purse, in spirit, in ambition, content to live at forty as if already old. Ah, yes, if only for this thing, Pilar deserved the shame we put upon her!"

It occurred to Emily that the age of chivalry was

not so dead as the world believed, but lingered on behind the ramparts of these hills, with their near memories of courts of love and *cavalieri serventi,* of wicked dragons and of paladins who slew them for the sake of ladies all forlorn. But she did not envy the strangers who had taken for their pleasure such an abode of ghosts as the ill-named House Ducontentia.

The Americans, however, seemed content to remain, despite the growing antagonism of the village. People rarely spoke now to the son when they encountered him with his sketchbook. The mother was never seen except in glimpses from neighboring windows, when she walked in the garden at the back; a slender figure, not leaning upon a cane, as might be expected of an old person or an invalid, but never alone; her son or the negress invariably accompanied her. And it was noted that when she became aware of their gaze she would hurry out of sight. The village people began to touch significant foreheads when they spoke of her; perhaps the negro servant was an attendant, rather than a maid? . . .

December of that year was like an old woman's memories of April; mornings of misty golden wonder, soft-tinted afternoons which grayed all too early into twilight. Only in winter does one see the earth colors at their warmest beauty; and stars in such high places seem so close that one has only to put up the hands and pluck them, flowers of fire, out of the hanging garden of the sky.

In the little vineyard behind the House Ducon-

tentia, wallflowers in sheltered nooks still breathed a pungent decaying sweetness, and a belated tree toad in a chink of the stones sounded feebly its tiny crystal knell of summer. Dead leaves still clinging to the trellised grapevines, offered shelter from staring eyes to a woman who, having been all her life accustomed to staring eyes, was come at last to dread them.

At night it was difficult to sleep for listening to the silence; whispering of the *gave*, thin high *sonnailles* of the sheep stirring in near-by pastures, with a deeper accent of cattle bells. Sometimes muffled footsteps trod the cobbles, very late; there were murmuring men's voices, the cautious spurt of a match. These, she thought, would be the *maledetta* returning with contraband from beyond the border. Or a cock crowed suddenly in the dark, which meant that witches were passing to a *sabbat* on La Rhune; and then it was well to rise from bed and scatter salt upon the fire, no matter if one's wise young son laughed at such ignorant superstition.

All the day and through the long, long nights a bell in the three-arched belfry opposite her window harshly clanged out the hours; always twice, insistent, as if to warn the world to make the most of them. How quickly they passed now, the hours! Yet she had yearned for winter to come soon, yearned to see the snow once more, making fairyland of the high forests, dancing on the wind in a dust of diamonds, folding in impenetrable quietness this ancient hamlet, those ancient crosses and discoid stones of

the graveyard opposite, where sleep would nevermore be broken by regrets.

She wanted to see the men go out again, the young men and the boys, the *skieurs*, mounting the higher slopes, daring the steeps on their long, fragile runners to spring out fearlessly over the gorge as if on wings. Men, men, how she had loved them always! Men and their hot, wild pleasures; men and the glorious things they did; men and their childish cruelties. She knew, who had so long followed the sun and the south wind, that for the making of men other things are needful—hardship, and the tonic touch of winter. Nowhere else in the world had she found such men as these of the Basque valleys: ardent, faithful, passionate as grave, strong children.

She rang a bell for her maid. "My son, Angélique —where is he?"

The other drawled in her patois: "*Mo pas connais*, missy. Reckon he's off somewhars again, paintin' his little pictures."

The mother frowned. Painting his little pictures of the eternal hills! "Alone, Angélique?"

"He don't never have nothin' to do with folks, missy; you knows dat."

The mother knew it only too well. "He makes no friends, my poor boy!"

The negress shook her head. "Acks like he's sort of scared of folks, specially these yere."

Her mistress winced. It was a woman's punishment, perhaps, to have a son who was afraid of other men.

She buried her face in some roses which had come from the distant hothouses at Biarritz. How charming he was to her always, the boy, as if to make up to her for pleasures that were no more! Yet it was time for him to be sending his roses to other women, now.

"Angélique, have you seen no young people in this neighborhood, no pretty girls?"

"Aplenty of 'em, missy; likely lookin' gals as you could want. The trouble is Mr. Johnny, he don't see 'em. Reckon you's done spiled him for lookin' at other ladies, honey," she added, with the comfortable, affectionate familiarity of her kind.

Again the mother winced. Was it true? Had her demands, her insatiable need to be adored, enervated her child beyond the power of loving others?

She reached from habit for her mirror, before she realized that there were no mirrors. John had taken them from her during her illness, saying in his teasing, mock-heroic way that hereafter his two eyes should be her mirrors. She knew what it meant—her beauty was going now, with the rest. But since the worshipful eyes of her son would always give her back the face they both remembered, what matter?

"Angélique, I will wear the rose-color tea gown tonight"—he always loved her best in rose color. "And see, my fingers! How they have lost their bloom!"

While the negress rouged and rubbed and solicitously polished them, the lady hummed under her

breath one of the English songs John always asked for when she sang for him in these long, empty evenings together, softly, so that neighbors should not hear:

"Pale hands, pink-tipped, like lotus buds afloat
On those far waters where I used to dwell—"

Sometimes as she sang she would reach her son one of the pink-tipped hands to kiss, as men had always kissed them. The negress paused involuntarily in her work to listen to the lovely whisper. Her mistress patted her cheek for it. At least one was still able to give pleasure! . . .

Lastra the *cordonnier* informed his clientele that the American monsieur Juan Smeet had at last shown the good manners to return the visit of Madame Emilie; marching on his two feet, *à l'Anglais*, and in leather shoes; which was foolish, but good for business.

He went on his two feet, as it happened, because he could not afford a horse; and besides, he was rather afraid of horses. He was afraid of a good many things—of these grim, staring people; of these grim, staring hills, with their disconcerting possibilities of violence, and their effect of a terrible, unalterable permanence.

"Before God was, I AM," he found himself often quoting in their presence; and got no comfort from it.

It had taken him some time to make up his mind to the step of consulting the Urruty, and he hoped

to find the younger of them at home—a man little older than himself, and familiar with American ways. But it was the father, Pedro, who greeted him courteously at the door, having watched his ascent with critical and speculative eyes.

The American explained, with the *brusquerie* of embarrassment, that he had come not to call, merely to ask advice: "Can you suggest some way by which a stranger can earn money in this neighborhood?"

"Money?" Urruty raised an eyebrow. "You lack money, monsieur? You are not then one of the rich Americans?"

The other smiled ruefully. "The terms are not so synonymous as Europe appears to think. Even my mother seems to regard a well-established bank account as inexhaustible; whereas ours happens to be very near the point of exhaustion."

Pedro murmured sympathetically, "Monsieur has perhaps been unfortunate at the tables?"

"I do not gamble. I detest cards," said the other, with the finality of one who may have seen too much of them. "The fact is I am no business man, sir, any more than my mother is a business woman. We have always had plenty of money to spend. It did not occur to me until recently to ask where our income came from."

"And where did it come from?" The question was so sharp as to be almost rude. It was the American's turn to raise an eyebrow.

"My mother is well known on the American stage," he replied noncommittally. He did not add

that she was equally well known in certain other American institutions, notably those of Rio de Janeiro, Havana, New Orleans—wherever in the New World the old Spanish passion for games of chance persisted unrestrained. "But she has always regarded her earnings as income rather than as capital."

"Ah, these *artistes!*" smiled Pedro gravely. "What optimists, to fancy that the fairy gifts will never fade or fail! To them, perhaps, they do not fail or fade; only to our aging eyes that watch. . . . May I ask what brings you to the Pyrenees, monsieur?"

"What, indeed!" sighed the other bitterly. "One of those whims we dared not cross. My mother has been very ill. The doctors ordered her change and rest—a long rest. She will in fact never—" His voice broke over it unexpectedly.

"Ah! She has heard a whisper from the pines?" murmured the Basque, using unconsciously a phrase of the peasants for the approach of death.

But the other took him literally. "Yes. She has always loved pine trees, wind, anything to do with mountains. Queer, isn't it? The illness has affected her heart. Any worry, any sudden shock, might mean the end. You see why she must not be troubled by money affairs."

"But," said the other sharply, "do you not realize the risk you take in bringing her to this place, of all places?"

The young man gave him a quick, furtive glance. "Risk? What risk? Oh, the elevation, you mean!

My mother is not a person to be deterred from her purposes by any sort of risk. She lives on risk. And she had set her heart on bringing me to these mountains. Heaven knows why! She seemed to think they might be good for me," he added deprecatingly.

"And you do not find them so?" asked his host.

"I detest them. They—they terrify me." The young man bit his lip. This quiet, whimsical gentleman tempted him to be more confidential than he wished. "The important thing, however, now that we are here, is to make enough money to keep us here."

"Perfectly," murmured Monsieur Urruty. "What training have you had?"

"None," admitted the other, rather desperately. "I was educated by tutors; my mother never wished me to take up any business or profession. She has preferred to keep me always near her. I can paint a little." He produced his portfolio. "I have brought some sketches to show."

The other threw up his hands in dismay. "But this is not Paris, my friend! You expect to earn a livelihood here in the valleys by painting pictures? Art, *chez nous*, is confined to lithographic representations of the blessed saints and photographic representations of the newly-married on the honeymoon. It is true we have produced our artists—among them Zuloaga—but they have not painted for Basques. Wait, however—an idea! You make portraits?"

John Smith answered after the fashion of the

man who, when asked to play the piano, replied that he never had done so, but was willing to try.

"Why not?" encouraged his host. "People always enjoy gazing on their own features, particularly if becomingly arranged. There is a young wife in our family whose husband is so infatuated that he would like to plaster the house with portraits of her," he added. "Come, let us consult my son Esteban."

They found the younger Urruty at the stables, where he was teaching his two-year-old heir to groom a horse. The child, a square and sturdy infant with the ardent dark eyes of his father under his mother's hair of palest gold, was making earnest passes with a currycomb at the person of a patiently recumbent mare."

"Ah, *mon fils,* you now assume the virile duties of the *nou-nou?*" inquired his father, grinning.

"On the contrary," retorted Esteban, "I train your grandson to relieve you of all the labors possible, in this, your enfeebled old age. . . . *Na, na, na,* my Wally! We do not groom an animal in the eye; it impairs the vision."

"You see," commented the elder to their guest, "the fellow is quite helpless with domesticity. It is the very moment to approach him."

But the American had no eye for pretty domestic pictures. He was far too young and too unhappy to savor the happiness of other people. His thoughts rarely left his mother, who must have her roses, her

perfumes, her habitual atmosphere of easy luxury until the end.

"I have brought," he began, not without pathos, "just a few little sketches—"

Esteban looked them over with impatient courtesy, wishing that Emily would appear to set their visitor more at ease, to remove from his eye that suspicious, wary look as of a dog which expects momently to dodge a kick. The sketches failed to interest him. He recognized a high-arched sentry bridge on his own property, from whose crumbling watch tower the approach of many an enemy—Saracens, English, the armies of Gaston de Foix—had been signaled down the valley in more warlike days. Another familiar figure was that of the town crier—a little girl who knitted as she walked, since time was not made to waste, and at intervals perfunctorily shrilled information through a megaphone. Still another represented the usual street-cleaning department of the Pyrenees, a mustachioed old lady who straddled a running gutter stream with shovel and fagot broom, sprinkling impartially cobbles and pedestrians alike.

Esteban wondered, as he had often wondered in the galleries to which he accompanied his wife, why people took the trouble to paint pictures of such commonplaces. But he said amiably, "I will buy this, and this, and this one, monsieur. What is your price?"

The American colored with surprise. "They aren't finished work, you know. I brought them as samples of what I can do. What do you want with

them?" It occurred to him that he was being mistaken for an object of charity.

Esteban was good at improvisation. He wanted them, he replied, for a friend of his, to illustrate a book he was making about Basques. "My friend Etcheverray shares your enthusiasm for the Pays Basque, monsieur."

The other muttered that he had no enthusiasm for the *Pays Basque*—on the contrary. Then he bit his lips, remembering that he spoke to Basques. But the Urruty were more courteous than himself; they apparently did not hear. They were smiling together over another familiar figure—a very dignified old woman in a voluminous black cape, seated imperturbably upon a caracoling young Spanish mule, with a large basket over one arm.

"That is not meant to be a comic figure," said John sharply, forgetting his shyness in professional pride. "That is an excellent type of the Euskaldunak; fearless, independent, so lacking in self-consciousness that it is never ridiculous; more vigorous in old age than most people are in youth. Look at that glance! She might be a warrior returning from battle, instead of some housewife, some shrewd old Etchekandere on her way from market."

"I am familiar with that warrior glance," murmured Pedro. "It usually means that my mother has sold the hogs at a better price than I could get. But for one who so dislikes the Pays Basque, you depict us with a certain sympathy, monsieur." Both

men were looking at him quizzically. "You also speak the Euskara?"

"Oh, no, only a word or two, such as one picks up anywhere." John paused abruptly, realizing that the question had been put in Euskara, which is not a language one picks up anywhere. But again his hosts were too courteous to notice the slip.

"If he makes so charming a picture of our *madre*," commented Esteban to his father, "what will he do with such a subject as our Emilie?"

"Faces of pretty young women never interest me," remarked the artist, somewhat flustered. "They have no shadows."

Esteban burst out laughing. "*Dame*, you are frank enough to be Basque yourself! What sort of man is this whom the faces of pretty young women do not interest?"

Emily herself, appearing opportunely, explained that he was not a man at all, only an artist; an opinion in which her husband all too obviously concurred.

"He is also," commented Pedro, when their blushing guest had gone, "the son of Pilar de Maytie. No wonder the beauty of other women fails to interest him!"

Apparently the alcalde had been mistaken in thinking art would have little commercial value in the Pyrenees. They took to it, John assured his mother, like ducks to water. After the portrait of Emily, in ancient Basque costume, was to be one of Esteban, to match; then one of the heir of the house—the

small *Etcheko Jauna*—provided he could be bribed to sufficient stillness. Then it appeared that Madame Urruty had long been yearning to perpetuate on canvas the likeness of her famous stallion, El Borak, ancestor to half the blooded stock in the valleys. Madame Fancine, Pedro's wife, not to be outdone, decided that posterity was entitled to a memory of her abundant contours before time and fate had entirely obliterated them. Monsieur Etcheverray, their neighbor, could use more sketches to illustrate his book. John saw before him a very busy period, which, since he had at least the makings of an artist, meant almost a happy period.

He accepted all these commissions with the courage of desperation, which is not so bad a taskmaster. If this sudden access of interest in art surprised him, he dared not look a gift horse in the mouth. Nor would he willingly have foregone his visits to the great old hacienda, whose hospitality offered so warm a refuge to friend and stranger alike.

The winter for which his mother yearned was come at last; not softly, beautifully, as she remembered snow, but whirling down from the Haute Pyr in windy avalanches, smothering road and hillside in shifting drifts which made wayfaring perilous. Yet through it all, unaccustomed as he was to weather, young Smith made his daily visits to the farm in the hills, so that the city pallor soon disappeared from his face and he learned to breathe deep and move lightly, as Basques move, with the aid of a *makhila.* He also bought, on the suggestion of Lastra, the

cobbler, some heavy felt *espadrilles,* leggings, a *béret,* and a short, full jacket of merino wool; so that his mother clapped her hands in joy when she saw him. "Now you look like a man, my Jaun-y! A true young peasant-gentleman! If you would but tie a nice little three-cornered shawl over the head and ears—see, like this," she coaxed. But John declined with Anglo-Saxon horror to tie a nice little three-cornered shawl over the head and ears.

These visits of her son to the Urruty gave her a certain gleeful pleasure. She was always watching in the shadow of the window curtain for his return, eager to hear what they had said to him, whether the little American wore a pretty frock, what refreshments were offered. "But, of course, you are careful to accept nothing, my son?"

Emily had often wondered at his carefulness to accept nothing, not so much as a glass of wine or a bit of cake. But Esteban seemed not at all surprised. "Naturally, he would not care to break bread except with friends."

John's mother chuckled with amusement—she had still the gay little laugh of a girl—over the joke of her son's invading the very stronghold of the enemy.

"If the old Léocadie but suspected!—Our Cousin the Lioness, we used to call her, papa and I, because of that fierce old ugly face. So each must have a portrait now, even the horse? Those absurd Urruty! They were never beautiful like ourselves," she added complacently.

"Esteban is the handsomest man I have ever seen," remarked John.

"What? Is it possible? Ah, I remember, the first wife of Pedro was quite charming. I must watch for this paragon. How I adore a beautiful man! But his beauty would be of a crude and savage type, *n'est-ce pas?* Nothing subtle; no delicacy of line like your own?"

"Oh, damn my delicacy of line!" muttered her son unhappily.

She kissed away his irritation, with solicitous, tender murmurs. Was it tired, then, of its charming nose like a Greek statue? Its sweet little Cupid's bow of a mouth which curled up at the corners when he smiled—as it was curling now?

John grinned unwillingly; neither he nor any other man could resist his mother long. She put an experimental finger on his nose and turned it upward, Irish fashion; she depressed it into Semitic outlines; she flattened it to resemble the nose of Angélique, studying each effect quite gravely. No, she decided at length, *le bon Dieu* knew what he was about when he made another nose so like her own! And now her Jaun-y must tell her whether the little Urruty girls had possibilities; whether Pedro really appeared to console himself with his new wife; what visitors had called at the hacienda while he was there. It always came back to that carefully careless question.

"Never Des Luynes?" she would ask rather wist-

fully. "You have not yet seen their neighbor, the Comte des Luynes?"

He shook his head. It did not occur to John to connect this name with the Monsieur Etcheverray who ordered sketches to illustrate his books; although he knew that in this country the use of the surname was often determined by property rather than paternity.

Pedro, indeed, had been at some pains to keep their neighbor away from the house while the portraits were being made. Etcheverray hungered sometimes for the old familiar stimulating talk of the cafés and the studios. But the resemblance was unmistakable between Pilar and her son; why awake memories which were better dead? What a misfortune if their poor friend were to discover the identity of the invalid now living in the House Ducontentia!

It occurred to Emily that the surest way to cure any man of an early infatuation was to confront him with its object many years later; but she kept this cynicism to herself, out of respect for more naïve sensibilities. She had taken Pilar's son under a maternal wing, somewhat to her own amusement; Emily accustomed herself with difficulty to the thought of herself as matron and mother.

"Take care that this pretty young man does not fall in love with you," warned Esteban. "I do not fancy myself in the rôle of jealous husband."

"Nor I," said Emily, with a shudder only half affected; the savage in this lover of hers was never far from the surface. "My difficulty would be to

make you jealous, darling. Any husband who deliberately names his first-born for a friend of his wife whom he never knew—"

"Wallace gave you to me, my Emilie; but for him there would have been no first-born," explained Esteban, so seriously that she laid her cheek on his hand. She loved this deep vein of sentiment in her husband, as frank and unashamed as his touch of cruelty. She thought of a certain headstone in the village *ilerri*, marked with a name and a date and the simple inscription:

HERE LIES AMONG FRIENDS
A TRUE AMERICAN GENTLEMAN

It was Esteban who had suggested the inscription, Esteban's orders which kept the grave of her friend decorated with flowers at every season, and with burning candles for All Souls' Day.

Now the infant Wally, mock herself as she might, was completing in Emily what the older Wally had begun. Certain primeval instincts stirred and deepened to the point of poignancy, so that at times she felt as cosmic as the earth-mother herself, ready to take to her bosom, as she took her little son, all the troubled children of men. It was a tenderness by which young Smith profited exceedingly.

He accepted it impersonally as it was offered, however; relaxed his anxious wariness in her friendly sympathy; stretched his soothed vanity, aired his serious, shy young opinions in the warmth of her

approval, and allowed her amiably to minister to him, male fashion; the while his eyes followed with boyish, eager admiration the careless, muscular, rather splendid grace of Emily's husband, who paid him no attention whatever. It was another odd experience for Emily to find herself thus ignored in favor of a rival attraction—an attraction, however, with which she thoroughly sympathized.

"Do be decent to the boy, darling," she often begged Esteban. "He so needs a friend!"

"He so needs a *bonne*, you mean," said her husband bluntly. "What a specimen! Flushing and stammering, afraid of his shadow. Why, I believe the fellow's half woman! If one were to say 'Scut!' to him he would run like a rabbit."

"Then you must be careful never to say 'Scut!' to him," she replied gravely. "Every real man is half woman, dear."

"I'll be damned if he is!" frowned her husband.

"He'd be damned if he weren't," smiled Emily, out of her growing wisdom.

Fate, which seemed for a while to have granted respite, was busying itself again in the affairs of Pilar de Maytie. Whether confidence had made her careless, whether others besides Pedro had recognized that graceful hand at the blinds, or the whisper of song, or the breath of characteristic fragrance which penetrated from behind closed doors, it so happened that her son, making his way one day toward the house of the Urruty, was overtaken by the umbrella

mender, on his brisk little donkey, with the paraphernalia of his trade bulging from either saddlebag. Hermose greeted the stranger distantly but kindly, as became a man riding his own steed to one afoot, and remarked as he passed, "I understand that monsieur entertains visitors today at the House Ducontentia."

The tone was casual enough, but had in it a hint of warning. John stopped, puzzled. Visitors? What visitors could have followed his mother to this remote place? He retraced his steps.

As he neared the village he saw there was a little crowd gathering in the Calle Mayor. He began to run. "You do well to make haste, monsieur!" called out the shoemaker as he passed. "It is those *femmes sacrées!*"

The excited chattering ceased as John pushed them toward his open door. From within came the sound of shrill vituperation; then the drawl of Angélique, puzzled but bellicose: "What you-all want? What they jabberin' about, missy? *Ce qu' ye dit mo pas connais!* Ain't they got no manners, pushin' theyselfs in whar they ain't invited? Hi-yi, take yo' dutty hands off'n me, white trash! Help! Help!"

There was a frightened scream. John pushed by the struggling women and got to his mother, lying limp and white among the pillows of the *chaise longue*, breathing rapidly, blue about the lips. The curtains had been jerked aside from the window, so that the morning light shone full upon her ravaged face, gaunt, yellow, with the skin drawn tight across

the bones like the skin of a mummy. She clung to him piteously, gasping. "Make them go, my son! Why do they look at me so?"

"Ah, see, she has her son, such as he is!" cried one of the women furiously; it was the wife of Olhaiby the blacksmith. "She has her son, *mais oui;* but mine, what has she done with mine? My beautiful great boy, my Hercule, strong as a young bull in the pastures, innocent as a cherub—what has become of him?"

'The voice of Rachel for her children calling,' thought John, wincing, as he held his mother.

The plaint of Rachel rose to an anti-climax, however. "And what," she shrilled, "has become of all my savings, intrusted to the hollow image of the Sainte Vierge? It was sacrilege to steal them from such a place! Money enough to buy a house, to buy a pair of mules! She has made of my son a thief; she is a thief herself!"

The lady laughed hysterically. "But it is money she wants then—only money? *Mon Dieu,* give it to her, Jaun-y, give what she asks! Here, take these rings, take anything! As for her cherub son, what would I do with such a cherub—I? One doesn't even remember the fellow, except that he was young and strong and adored me."

"Hush, mother!"

"But I will not hush! Why should I hush? By what right does she accuse me of sins for which I am not responsible? Did I ask her ridiculous offspring to follow at my heels like an enamored pet sheep?"

"Ah, ah, you hear?" shrieked the outraged mother. "She calls my lost Hercule an enamored pet sheep!"

The lady gasped with laughter—went on gasping. John broke a crystal under her nose, found a hypodermic needle, bared the scarred and wasted arm. The women fell silent, staring.

"There, there!" he murmured, as if he were the parent and she the child. "Hide your face on my shoulder, so! Hush! There is only me—only your Johnny—no one else. See, they have gone!"

"Yes, one has gone," muttered Madame Olhaiby from the door, with a venom more deadly than her shrieking anger. "It was for revenge one came, and it is revenge enough only to see her face. She, the exquisite Pilar de Maytie, adored by all men, hated by all women! Look at her! I ask you, look at her now! Ah, bah!" She spat upon the floor. "To hate a woman who looks like that would be unchristian."

The dazed lady lifted her head from John's shoulder. "What do they say? What did she mean, that woman? Am I so altered, then? Is it—is it very bad? Oh, my son. . . . Angélique, quickly, a mirror—bring me a mirror! Have I grown—ugly?"

He kissed her face, lips, cheeks, eyelids, in a passion of pity. There were tears in his voice; Esteban would have blushed for him. But he managed an amused laugh.

"You, ugly? What a joke! You, the most beautiful person in the world? What do these peasants

know about beauty? Apple-cheeked idiots with the figures of hitching posts! Wait until I do your portrait for the Salon! I shall be famous overnight."

She gave a queer little sob; perhaps a sob of relief. "Ah, yes, you like your faces with shadows to them, funny boy!"

Presently, still clinging to him, she fell asleep in his arms.

But peace was no more an inmate of the House Ducontentia. Fear had taken its place; that fear Pilar had so regretted in her son—the fear of people. All night now she listened for sounds more ominous than the passing of smugglers, or witches going to a *sabbat*. Witches can be less terrible than human women. She dared no longer sit near the window to watch her loved hills for fear people might suspect her presence there, and be reminded. Many times in the day she would send her son or the negress tiptoeing to the window, to be sure that a crowd was not collecting below. Soon she had no longer courage to leave her bed; and John, at his wit's end, could not quit her side for an hour.

There was no more portrait painting; though, indeed, he would not have ventured to go again to the Urruty house, since they must have learned his identity.

Once both were startled by a loud, imperative knocking on the street door.

"Sh-h! Don't be so frightened, mother!" said John from his post at the window curtains. "It's only a man, alone."

He opened to find Esteban Urruty, with skii slung over his shoulder, stamping the snow from his feet; for an incipient blizzard was blowing in with the *tramontana.* John's face, which had brightened at sight of him, stiffened when the other declined to enter.

"My grandmother would be angry," said Esteban simply. "I am not, like my wife, a privileged person *chez nous.* I have brought the payment for the second portrait. My wife thought you might want the money, to take your mother away."

The other flushed in his nervous fashion, but said quietly, "The portrait is not yet finished; I can't accept payment for it. And why should I wish to take my mother away?"

Esteban curbed his impatience, casting about for words to say what he had come to say, in the tactful manner he had promised to say it.

"We think it best you should go," he finally declared. "We have felt from the first that your mother took in returning here too great a risk."

John paled a little. "My mother was fully aware of every risk! You have known from the first who we were?"

"Naturally. It is my father's business, as alcalde, to know what goes on in his community, and to see that it goes on properly."

"What a pity," commented John, his treacherous voice shaking despite himself, "that your father, the alcalde, did not make it his business to see that a sick woman was permitted peace in her own house!"

Esteban shrugged in some surprise. "My father is not God. It is your mother's conscience, doubtless, which destroys her peace, rather than the conduct of her neighbors. But *ça m'est égal,*" he added, hastily reminding himself to be tactful. "What I wish to suggest is that if you lack sufficient money to go away now, monsieur, I am at your service."

"Thank you; I never borrow money," muttered the other, by this time quite livid.

"You are lucky," commented Esteban with a disarming grin. "Myself, when I have been in the soup, I have borrowed from everybody who would lend! . . . *Alors*, as you will. I make in that case another proposition. My wife has taken a fancy for your house; she would like to buy it, to make some sort of museum here for things of the past. An idea—what?"

John replied as stiffly as possible that the House Ducontentia was not his to sell; it belonged to his mother, who preferred to retain it.

"Till her death, naturally," said Esteban, casting tact to the winds. "But afterward? You are sole heir, probably, and you are not happy in this country. Very well, sell me your interest now, take your mother away to some place where she will die more comfortably. I can recommend Pau, or Cauterets, or Bagnères-de-Luchon; the doctors are excellent there. She need never know that the house has changed hands. We would be willing to pay well; it is a fine property." He went on talking at random, to cover the emotion which, to his dismay, threat-

ened to overcome the other. ("*Madre de Dios*, I thought at any moment the fellow would begin to blub on my shoulder!" he reported later to Emily.)

At last John mastered himself sufficiently to decline the offer with finality. He had urged his mother to sell, he said, more than once, but now his own mind had altered. The House Ducontentia would not change hands either now or later.

"Ah," said Esteban, lifting an eyebrow, "you no longer dislike the *Pays Basque?*"

"More than ever!" The other spoke in a cold fury. "It and everything in it! But it is our country; you will hardly contest our right to die here, if not to live. One weak and undefended woman you were able to drive away. But my mother is no longer undefended."

Esteban was looking at him with a new interest. "So I see!" He suddenly held out his hand. "Allow us to help you, De Maytie," he urged in a very different tone. "It is a cousin's privilege."

The other replied coldly that his name happened to be Smith.

"Never to us," remarked Esteban. "'Smith'—it is too much to ask of our poor Basque tongues! 'De Maytie' goes better here. Use it, my friend; I think you need not be ashamed of it. *Au revoir!*"

The other, closing the door abruptly upon this brusque, arrogant, agreeable young son of fortune, told himself that he hated Esteban Urruty with all his heart. But Esteban was rather difficult to hate.

He came soon to regret his gesture of lofty inde-

pendence; penniless youths with dying mothers on their hands cannot afford such gestures. Winter had settled upon the high valleys; no more dreaming Saint Martin's summer to lure the heart into false security, no south wind whispering of Africa. The *tramontana* howled outside, driving the cold through chinks and crannies of the old drafty house, into the very heart. John went about the cavernous halls glad of his overcoat; the negress Angélique, shriveled to the piteous ash color of her kind, could not be coaxed from the one meager fire that burned on the kitchen hearth for cooking.

But to enter the invalid's room was like going back into summer again. There wood and briquettes burned recklessly day and night, heavy brocade curtains were drawn against the cold, and in the softened glow of rose-shaded lamps and candles the gay Aubusson carpet was like a flowery spring mead.

Often the air was sprayed with the costly scent invented for Pilar by a certain famous *parfumier* in the days of her own fame. John hoped she would not miss the roses; he was no longer able to manage roses. Perhaps she would think they had been delayed because of the deep snow.

But Pilar had her own theory about that. "Tell me!" she coaxed once, in a moment of confidence, forgetting to listen for alarms while he brushed the bright hair across her pillow with those long, strong strokes which only a man can make. "Confess to me something, my Jaun-y. Who is receiving now these flowers you used to order for your poor neglected

maman, eh? Not that I reproach you; I am rejoiced that I have at last a rival—if she is a sufficiently charming rival? She must not be less so than myself."

"But you ask the impossible, my dear," he proclaimed in the grandiose manner he affected with her, kissing her hand to hide his telltale face.

"Aha, you blush! Come, come, I read you like an open book! Do not try to deceive me. Who is she, then—what, what?" she cried in sudden eagerness. "Never tell me it is the wife of young Urruty, the little *chic* American! But naturally, who else? These *belles paysannes* would hardly interest you, after me. Ah—ah, that is better than I hoped! The granddaughter-in-law of my poor old Cousin the Lioness—what a revenge! Consider her anxiety! And she, the little wife—you find her kind, my darling? You find her utterly delightful?"

"Only less so than yourself," murmured John, dutifully trying to look as guilty as it pleased her to think him.

"But already married! *Quel dommage!* No matter, presently she will arrange for you some suitable marriage, doubtless," mused Pilar, who had often performed such friendly offices for her own passing favorites. She lay awhile quite content, smiling and sighing a little over past triumphs, while the wind howled unnoted, and snow drifted deep and deeper over crosses and discoid gravestones; and in the three-arched belfry opposite, the hours tolled slowly on, never hurrying, never lagging.

By the time of Noël the sick woman was too ill to realize that the blessed season was at hand; she who had so longed to see once more the roadside shrines gay with colored lamps and paper flowers, the *crèche* brought out into the open porch of the church, with its familiar antique figures of Mary and Joseph, of God the Father on a cloud above, suspended by a wire; shepherds and Magi and oxen all of the same size as the pink waxen Jesu, although less handsomely attired; she herself having made his Christmas costume out of her first-communion veil, in the long-past days when she was devout.

Alone of the village, the House Ducontentia had no cross of evergreen nailed above its door, no candle burning in its windows on the eve of Noël; only persons returning from the midnight mass were scandalized to hear music issuing from it at such an hour, as in long-ago nights of revelry; the cheerful thump of a piano, a man's voice singing the strangely syncopated native music of America, loud and strong. It was John, trying to drown the sound of their sabots on the cobblestones, which alarmed his mother.

For though she no longer paid much heed to things about her, having reached that preoccupation with the immediate affairs of life—sleeping, eating, breathing—which precedes the near conclusion of them, she still listened subconsciously, fearfully, for noises from outside; starting up in terror at a sudden footfall, or the murmur of voices, to cry to her son that they were coming, they were surely coming now!

John, his drawing board at the north window of her room, worked on doggedly at little sketches he hoped still to sell for Monsieur Etcheverray's book. Often he had to stop to quiet his mother, to relieve the struggling heart with stimulant, to rub away the pain of aching limbs, as Angélique could never do. But always he went back to work again; for doctors had told him that his mother's illness might be a matter of weeks and months; and meanwhile they must eat.

He often marveled at the quantity of food, even of delicacies, Gerbera was able to provide them, on the small pittance he could spare for marketing—eggs, chickens, hothouse fruits, appeared quite as usual on their bill of fare. It did not occur to him that Madame Urruty would have found it impossible to let a sick neighbor, friend or stranger, lack for anything, so long as her own larder was full.

But on the eve of New Year's, he found himself no longer able to paint. He sat all day, watching his mother furtively, despairingly, wondering if it was so that people looked when they were dying. She slept, the sound of her rapid irregular breathing filling the room, the house, the world. At intervals Angélique, eyes rolling white in their sockets, brought him the hypodermic, and the breathing quieted. More than once the old servant Gerbera came to the foot of the bed and stood watching, her lips moving over a rosary. At last she asked timid permission to go for Monsieur le Curé, or for the doctor.

John shook his head, though the presence of any other man in the house that day would have been a comfort. He had long since promised his mother that there should be no priests about her sick bed.

"They would make me confess my sins," she explained plaintively, "and I do not wish to confess my sins. To discuss unpleasant matters is so depressing." He knew that she was beyond the help of doctors.

At dusk, when it was time to light the rose-shaded lamps and candles, his mother woke for the first time in hours to sudden consciousness. "Listen!" she whispered, as she had so often whispered. "*What is that?*"

The boy assured her, as usual, that it was nothing; passing neighbors, perhaps, or the rising wind in the plane trees. But was it nothing?

The sound that had awakened her came slowly nearer, louder; resolved itself into distant shouts and laughter, the blowing of horns, the dinning of sheep bells, the beating of drums; noises gay and cheerful enough to ordinary ears, but to these who listened full of sinister implication.

"Angélique, quick, the balcony!" gasped her mistress. "Go out on to the balcony and see who comes!"

Her terror was contagious. Was it of this Esteban had wished to warn them? John felt his limbs begin to tremble: so a young horse's limbs will sometimes tremble before it goes to the wire.

The negress reported a crowd of people, of men,

entering the Place; crossing it toward the Calle Mayor; approaching their own door.

Pilar gave a despairing moan. "*C'est ça!* It is they. I knew they would come. Oh, my son, my poor boy, they give us again the charivari!"

John's lips set over teeth that chattered despite himself. "What of it, mother? We need not listen. Remember, I am an American citizen. This is your house. No man dares enter it; no man can drive us from it."

"Ah, but so many men!" His mother wrung her hands. "That is what I said; for almost a week I bore it alone. But you do not know them; they are tireless, without mercy. I have not the courage now; and you, my poor darling, were always more daughter to me than son. You do not know what it is to bear—the constant, horrible noise, no sleep, no rest; the shame, the disgrace of it! Friends of childhood, friends one had always trusted and loved! I cannot go through it again—I cannot! Ah, ah, what are you going to do, there?"

It had occurred to John quite suddenly what he was going to do. He took something from a drawer and went toward the balcony.

"I shall ask them to go away," he said, very reasonably.

"Do you think they will listen? Foolish one, they would not listen even to me! They will only laugh at you!"

"I think not," muttered John. "If they won't

listen to me, perhaps they will listen to this." He showed her a pistol.

She screamed and tried to get out of bed to go to him. "No, no, not that! Angélique, stop him, hold him! Do not anger them; they would tear you to pieces! Because they are so quiet, so calm in manner, you do not know how terrible is the anger of these Basques!"

Her son answered, with a strange little calm of his own, "Oh, yes, I do! Because I am Basque myself."

At that moment Gerbera came stumbling up the stairs, for once quite voluble with excitement. "Master, mistress, the *visite!* The New Year visitors have come for their cake! Ah, *mon Dieu,* and we have no cake!"

The change in the sick woman was incredible. She began suddenly to laugh, to clap her hands. "What, what, the New Year *visite,* and no cake in the house? What a disgrace! Quickly, my girl, run through the door at the back to our neighbors, to Pantchika at the inn, and get whatever they can spare. Cider too—or no, it is not enough; hydromel is better, or Jurançon. But get what you can, Gerbera, and be quick about it!"

"*Oui, oui,* madame, I run!"

"And you, my son"—she turned to him in growing composure—"make haste to greet our friends at the door. Present my apologies that I receive them *en déshabille.* Say to them—in the Basque, of course, as I have taught you—the proper wel-

come for ceremonials: 'Who crosses this threshold enters his home.' . . . Why do you linger? They are already at the door!" There was, indeed, a loud, repeated knocking.

John obeyed her as one in a trance. It seemed to him that a miracle had occurred. Before his eyes, his mother, a dying woman, was transformed into the gracious hostess of other days, the chatelaine of a great house preparing to receive guests. He heard, as he went, her faint voice giving eager directions: "A tea-gown, Angélique! Yes, yes, the lace one. A mantilla to conceal the hair. Certainly, some rouge; now a fan. My rings, so! Do not forget the perfume for the hands."

She had described to him many of the customs of her childhood, occasions of rustic ceremony as unchanging in remote places as the race itself; among them that of New Year visiting, which originated perhaps with this ancient people: when young men of a neighborhood band themselves together as at carnival time to make the rounds of the valleys, singing and drinking and eating seedcake with all from whom they choose to claim hospitality; for to be chosen for the New Year's visit is an honor to any house. It was many years since this honor had been paid to the House Ducontentia.

Esteban Urruty was at the head of the New Year visitors; with him not only all the leading young men of the vicinity, but many of the older ones, to mark a special occasion. The alcalde, his father, was there. Monsieur Abbadie, the clever notary, who

rarely mingled with ordinary folk; Olhaiby, the blacksmith; lame Lastra in his cobbler's apron; many others whom John recognized by sight. Even Père Marcós, the curé, had come to give the authority of the church to this welcome of a returning citizen.

To John's dazed greeting it was the curé who responded with the sonorous phrase of Basque ceremonial: "May peace be in this house!"

Pilar heard, and smiled wryly in her bed. "So, *mon père,* I do not escape my charming old conscience, after all!" she gave him greeting.

They hesitated at her door, awkward and embarrassed, the older men recalling the manner of their last visit to her, the younger ones suddenly conscious of their puerile entertainment—the drums and horns and bells; shy of this famous lady whose beauty had become a tradition in the valleys. Something in the dim, fragrant, rose-lighted chamber awed them a little; certainly not their hostess, who soon had them at ease. Propped high on lacy pillows, eyes and lips smiling their old allure from the shadow of the mantilla behind a slow-moving, graceful fan, it was still the most charming voice in the world which greeted them, calling many by name, using for some the *tutoyer* of familiarity, giving to each some little personal word:

"What, Olhaiby, you yourself in place of the lost Hercule? How that is kind! But do not despair of Hercule, my friend; we are always *nostalgique,* we prodigals. . . . And monsieur the notary, who first taught me cards! Ah, *mon* Abbadie, how often

I have cause to be grateful to you for it! When all else fails, the cards remain—with, of course, religion." She made a little *moue* at the priest. "Truly, dear neighbor Lastra, it takes a cripple to make comfortable the feet of other people! Never anywhere in the world have I found such dancing sandals as those you used to sew for me."

They saw that if she had anything to forgive them, she had forgotten it.

"And these, my friends, all these *beaux garçons*—they are your sons? But how charming of you to bring them to me! Or is it perhaps the sons," she inquired, smiling, "who have brought me their shy papas?"

The youths grinned at one another sheepishly, pleased with the gallant imputation.

Pedro Urruty she drew close with an affectionate hand, to ask for further kindness to her child. "You did not know him, cousin? How amusing! Yet he is mine, all mine, from the tawny hair to the hunger for everything that is beautiful. But he is tamed, *le pauvre petit!* He sings and dances only with the paintbrush. My cousin Léocadie, your mother, will know why I have brought my one lamb back to the home pastures. She must protect him from her savage cubs.—Myself, I adore a *beau sauvage!*" she added, making outrageous eyes at Esteban. "What a pity there is not more time, or I should endeavor to give the pretty American wife a twinge or two!"

"Madame, I am certain you would succeed," laughed Esteban, gallantly bending over her hand.

The gay voice tired; perhaps her wits began to fail a little, too, for she kept peering beyond them as if for someone else.

"Is there nobody there, no one standing just outside? Look, my Jaun-y! Tell him to enter; we are friends here—only friends. I must see all of you, all I can of you. Ah!" Her face lighted at a step on the threshold. "*C'est toi,* Des Luynes! At last! Gentlemen, my guests"—she made them a pretty, confidential gesture—"will you leave us now? Will you allow my servants to offer you some refreshment in the salon? Afterward card tables shall be brought; there must be music, dancing—what you will. If you like, I myself will dance for you," she offered graciously, forgetting. "But for the moment Monsieur le Comte and I have much to say to each other, you comprehend—much to say."

Yet when they were alone, except for her son and the priest waiting unseen, those two said very little. His head was bowed upon the fragile hands he held; those hands which do not change as a face changes.

"But, my dear, you have brought me no son, like the others!" she reproached him in a voice barely more than a whisper. "Why is that?"

"I have not married, Pilar."

"No?" She made a sound of regret. "Your poor mother! And how foolish of you, my Tubal, when I myself have married since, and often."

He said below his breath, "You have not married me."

"True," she sighed. "And now it is too late. What a pity! But for that you should be grateful to me, my dear; my one self-denial. I knew that madame your mother was right: as a mistress you might have found me delightful, but as a wife—" She shrugged.

"Hush, Pilar!" he said sternly. "Your son is listening."

"My son, thank God, is not a woman! So you do not forget? Ah, truly, *'Eschaldene fededen'*—'Basque and faithful!'" She quoted a saying of her people. "Faithful to what? one wonders. Not to my virtues; *ils n'existent pas.*" She made her droll grimace. "Not to my need of you, for that soon passed—I am sorry, Tubal, but that soon passed. I have loved all men too well to remain long true to any.—Faithful to what, then? To my beauty?"

"Perhaps, Pilar."

"But what a dangerous vice, this passion for beauty!—never to be sated. Worse than the cards, my friend, or the drink, or women. Beauty of the sea, the hills; beauty of music, singing, dancing; beauty of young men, of love in human eyes; beauty of one's own face gazing back out of the mirror—beware of it, Tubal! We do not lose that sterile passion, with other passions. Eh, well!" She sighed. "Come close, my dear. Lean over me."

He did as he was bid, thinking she meant to kiss him. With ruthless hand she pushed aside the rose-colored shade of the lamp beside her, so that its light glared full and merciless upon her ruined face.

Watching, she smiled a little at the start he tried to suppress. "So," she said, "that is my reparation, my *gage d'amour!* Now you should find forgetting easier."

From below came the cheerful, familiar clink of glass on glass, some command in a young man's voice, the stirring beat of a drum, the full, fine-swinging rhythm of a Basque New Year's chant. The woman who listened moved her hand in time to it, or thought she did so; paying no further heed to the two who knelt beside her bed, lover and son, nor to the urgent, hurried prayers of Père Marcós, who wept as he prayed. Life, she thought dreamily—what an experience! Life that came and went and came again, with the south wind and the north wind, with the hours in the belfry yonder; never hurrying, never lagging, never failing. . . .

The door of the House Ducontentia closed behind the New Year visitors. A breath of haunting fragrance following them out into the windy darkness; of fragrance and of warmth, which passed like a caress across their cheeks, their lips, their memories. It was perhaps the soul of Pilar de Maytie, lingering a moment before it dissipated itself upon the wide night air.

LAS SEÑORITAS

CHAPTER FIVE

LAS SEÑORITAS: who find that love is a contagious symptom

THEY were the only persons so-called in the community—so-called collectively, at least, since in the singular each was addressed like ordinary people, merely as "mademoiselle." Some centuries earlier, when the northern provinces of the Pyrenees made their honorable and unconquered surrender to Gaston de Foix, prince of warriors and poets, the Olhagarray and a few others had resented bitterly the necessity for transferring their sympathetic allegiance from Spain to the less congenial neighbor. Las Señoritas, being of an official family, continued still to resent it; reminding Emily Urruty of certain countrywomen of her own, who prefer to remain unreconstructed rebels even unto the third and fourth generations, although the men who fought the war between the States have long lain down together in peace.

Just what constituted the Olhagarray an official family, Emily was not certain; a great-grandfather at Court, perhaps; the rumor of a distant cousin who was lady in waiting to the Queen—meaning, of course, the Court and Queen of Spain. For the Señoritas would have regarded the court of France, had there been one, as merely an upstart, a sort

of synthetic reproduction of royalty: just as Biarritz appeared to them quite a vulgar mushroom growth, in contrast with its drowsy older neighbor, Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where persons of names one recognized still occupied their family *domecs,* although they found it advisable to let out the more desirable rooms to visitors.

The ladies Olhagarray themselves let out their lower floor to Lastra the shoemaker. Not that they were poor; Basques are rarely poor; but the native thriftiness which made their father, Don Licerio, able to provide such excellent dots for each of his three daughters persisted in the daughters themselves; made it impossible for themto touch even the income from the dots, which went on increasing and multiplying comfortably long after the time had passed when dots might be considered a necessity.

For the Señoritas were old now, old before their time, as only unmarried ladies leading the cramped and lonely lives of their caste, in remote French provinces, can be old; even the little Mademoiselle Chiquita, who had a dimple in her cheek. Once it had seemed to her impossible, peeping into the tall dim mirrors at either end of the salon, that she could ever grow really old, who had such youth in her heart, in her fancies, in her feet. The dimple was to her a sort of promise, an assurance of something yet to come, which kept her from being frightened. But before her eyes her beloved sisters were aging into strangers: Teresa's once slender body was thickening, coarsening into the heaviness of a peas-

ant woman's; the spirituelle Eulalie became with every year more fragile and faded, like a flower left too long without water on the altar, which does not lose its petals but shrivels and withers slowly into dust. She, little-named by her father "Chiquita," was younger, of course, much younger—at least a year or two—but she had ceased some time since to peep hopefully into the tall, dim mirrors of the drawing-room, content to leave them season after season shrouded in their covers of mosquito net.

Lastra's wife, who had been their *bonne*, still accompanied them when they went abroad; their father the Don, who knew the wickedness of the world—none better!—would have turned in his grave at the thought of his maiden daughters appearing in public unattended by a duenna. The four middle-aged women, las Señoritas a step in advance, Lastra's wife in her proper place at heel but joining with unrestrained zest in their mutual conversations, were familiar figures at fêtes in all the near-by towns, and even at such neighboring spas as were frequented by Spanish aristocracy. The ladies Olhagarray were fond of travel; they kept their carriage for the purpose, a large and cumbrous affair which required to pull it a pair of stout unmatched ponies rented on occasion from the omnibus of the inn. Once in the year they always made an excursion to San Sebastian, where lived the cousin in waiting to the Queen, who was generally supposed to entertain them in courtly fashion.

But Lastra's wife had that most important virtue

in servants; she knew when to keep silence. The truth was that the cousin in waiting had been dead these many years; and that long ere her death she had forgotten the existence of her timid, inconsiderable little relatives from the provinces. However, their papa having always taken them to San Sebastian once during the season, they continued to take themselves, with Madelon to shepherd them; though it became yearly more of a difficulty to refurbish their Paris dresses for this event, adding a panel here, a fall of lace there, re-turning the front breadth, removing the court train one season, lengthening it the next; according to the journal or fashion subscribed for by the village modiste, and borrowed by everybody else. To be sure, the ladies Olhagarray could quite well have afforded new Paris dresses; but since the death of their papa, who was to select them?

Don Licerio, who did not impose upon himself the same retirement from the world he thought desirable in wife and daughters, had acquired somewhere, somehow, a very pretty taste in ladies' dress. He was the boon companion of his neighbor, the Sieur de Maytie, father of the famous and infamous Pilar; and while not for a moment would he have permitted intercourse between his fair filial flowers and that degrading influence of womankind, he was not above accepting Pilar's expert advice in the selection of his flowers' wardrobe.

"In Paris," as he once confided to Pedro Urruty, "one permits oneself contacts which at home would

astonish oneself, *n'est-ce pas?*"—so that what was left of the Señoritas' worldgoing wardrobe was still quite sophisticated.

Emily first became aware of this when she paused in passing, as was her wont, to exchange the compliments of the day with Lastra, leaning sociably over the half door of his cobbler shop. In the background she noted Madelon, his wife, busy with pursed lips and puckered brow over a lapful of spangled ruffles and black velvet, the borrowed fashion journal propped before her. But Madame had come just in time, cried Madelon with great relief, to inform one whether it was true that in the world, as the journal said, décolleté was worn no longer low at the back?—such a pity, when the shoulders of Mademoiselle Chiquita were as those of a plump white cherub!

Emily stared with surprise at this unexpected interest in the frivolities of fashion; and was then informed of the impending yearly visit to San Sebastian.

"While we spend as much time as possible at the bullfight—" began Madelon; and was interrupted incredulously by Emily.

"The bullfight! The ladies Olhagarray attend the bullfight?"

"But it is for that we go to San Sebastian, naturally!—the youngest bulls, the bravest picadors, to be found in all of Spain. The Señoritas have a great devotion for the bullfight, Mademoiselle Chiquita especially. Also at the Hotel Maria Chris-

tina one has it very gay," added Madelon complacently; and the ladies Olhagarray, she indicated, did not fail to attract their meed of attention in so august an assemblage. "It is our custom to dine in the public *salle à manger*—oh, but I assure you, it is quite *comme il faut*, with myself standing behind the chair of Mademoiselle Eulalie. The Queen Mother herself has been known to dine in the public *salle à manger* with a lady in attendance behind her chair. And afterward we go perhaps to the Kursaal to hear the foreign music played; or we make the promenade on foot to inspect the windows of the *magasins*—Mademoiselle Chiquita has an especial devotion for the shop windows. As you may conceive, we have our adventures"—Madelon bridled. "It is well indeed for the Señoritas that my rheumatism still permits me to accompany them!"

Once, it appeared—and only a few years previously—when Mademoiselle Chiquita had lingered a step behind the others to gaze into a particularly alluring window, a stranger had addressed her.

"And what a stranger!—handsome as a sun god," sighed Madelon, romantically. "His mustaches waxed and pointed until they would have pricked the cheek!"

He had murmured into the ear of the unconscious Chiquita, "*Et puis*, Mademoiselle Dimple? What may I offer you?" . . . Fancy, to one of the ladies Olhagarray!

Emily indeed found it difficult to fancy.

"Fortunately I was at hand, me. I said to her,

'Run, run, mademoiselle, surround yourself quickly with your sisters, while I attend to this desperado!' Then I put my two hands upon my hips, like this"—she suited the action to the word—"and I hissed at him between the teeth, like this: 'Ah, ah, son of a female pig, species of a camel, marauding nincompoop that you find yourself! Do you guess to whose daughter you have thus addressed your incomparable insults—eh?'

"'What! can it be the daughter of my old friend God Almighty?' inquired that insolent, grinning.

"'In a manner of speaking, yes!' I replied—for are we not all the children of God, madame? 'But she is also'—I paused for the effect—'the daughter of Don Licerio Olhagarray, of the house Arahaïa, in the province of the Soule!' And I left him crushed. . . . But if you will believe me, madame, that innocent, that Chiquita, had *not* surrounded herself with her sisters, but stood there waiting, unafraid! And the desperado took off his hat to her with a low bow, saying, 'I ask your pardon, señorita, to have insulted you.' And she replied, as if she had known him always, 'Have you insulted me then, señor?' You see how it is well they still have me to protect them!"

It gave Emily quite a new impression of the ladies Olhagarray, particularly of the one called Chiquita, whose rather frivolous pet name Esteban had once explained to her:

The Don, it seemed, having chosen to spite his

wife (whom he did not forgive for bearing him only daughters) by naming each of his daughters firmly for his own mother, "Maria Teresa Eulalie," distinguished among them by calling the eldest "Eulalie," the second "Teresa," and the last, and prettiest, "Chiquita."

"Which is to say in English 'Cutie,'" said Esteban, who prided himself on his knowledge of American idiom.

Now the nickname seemed to her no longer quite so vulgarly unsuitable. Poor little starved, shy, innocent 'Miss Cutie,' with her astonishing passion for bullfights and shop windows! Emily decided, when the opportunity offered, to cultivate the society of Mademoiselle Chiquita.

Las Señoritas would have been surprised indeed at pity from Emily, or indeed from anybody: they who alone of the village possessed a private carriage, in which they drove each week to mass, although the church was only on the far side of the Place. They also drove at stated intervals to call on the ladies of the Urruty family; and upon Monsieur le Comte des Luynes; and upon the doctor's wife, and the ancient aunt of the notary—which always embarrassed them pleasurably, because both the doctor and the notary had been among certain suitors discouraged by their papa when they were young. And at stated intervals, on the suggestion of Madelon, who was of a sociable nature, they entertained certain selected neighbors at cakes and coffee, with music afterward; for Don Licerio had not been

niggardly in providing his daughters with accomplishments, selected by himself as seemed most suitable. Eulalie, who had fine arms, plucked on the harp; Teresa performed solidly and efficiently, as she did all things, on the pianoforte; while Chiquita —it would have been incredible to Emily before she learned of the episode of the stranger with the pricking mustaches—Chiquita danced. She who had never in life, perhaps, danced with any partner except her shadow, did it so charmingly that the mothers of that light-footed country sent her their babies, almost out of the cradle, to be taught. It was these who kept her heart and her fancies and her feet so young, perhaps. Besides, they provided a nice little income; and while she had no need whatever of the income, it gave her a secure, almost important feeling to know that, materially speaking, she was dependent upon nobody for anything at all. Chiquita was not by any means a mere old maid; she was the Pyrenean version of a bachelor woman, an advanced feminist, who preferred to regard matrimony as a romantic adventure rather than as an economic necessity.

For the rest, the Señoritas occupied themselves, as do maiden ladies elsewhere, with such duties as others have no time for. Eulalie, the curé's right hand, specialized in the Lives of the Saints and good works in general. Once, indeed, when an epidemic broke out in the nearby settlement of *cagots*, self-immolation rose to the point of heroism, and it was Eulalie who helped to care for those unfor-

tunates, until she contracted the malady herself—which left her delicate skin oddly thickened and roughened; and lessened considerably, as the Don was frank to point out, her possibilities of a suitable marriage. It also intensified her predilection, perhaps, for the religious life.

Teresa, the middle one, was regrettably *pot-au-feu* in tendency, her papa was wont to explain; an excellent hand with chickens and with flowers, her nimble needle forever busy with new costumes for the Madonna and Saints and other holy figures of the altar; entering into democratic competition with Pantchika and various other notable cooks and housewives of the village; and incidentally making the old age of her papa so very comfortable that he saw no reason whatever to hasten a search for a suitable husband.

As to Chiquita, his little favorite—surely she was in no haste to leave the indulgent safety of the parental knee? She assured him that she was not; and so such suitors as did in due course appear—the notary, the doctor, gentlemen from other valleys, and persons whom they encountered on their travels—were discouraged by this tender parent on the grounds of not being sufficiently suitable *partis* for his daughters. By this means Don Licerio retained not only the pleasure of his daughters' company, but the use of their three dots, until he had no longer need of such things. And when he died, the sisters had each other; what more could women ask? Each of the ladies Olhagarray would have assured

inquirers that her two sisters were the dearest, most charming, most delightful companions in all the world; they vied with each other in sisterly admiration and devotion and self-sacrifice.

No, *las Señoritas* were by no means sorry for themselves; except on moonlit nights of spring, perhaps, when lovers were abroad with guitar and *basau-flûte;* and then they did not know that they were sorry. They took a *tisane* of bitter herbs for the health.

After the birth of Emily's second baby, her little Léocadie, she was glad enough to avail herself of the opportunity to send her first-born to Mademoiselle Chiquita on several days in the week, to work off some of his redundant animal spirits in the intricacies of the *saut Basque* or the farandole.

"Though three years does seem a bit young to commence one's social career!" she protested to Madame Urruty; who replied that one was never too young to cultivate polite deportment.

Emily laughed till she cried over the spectacle of a dozen or so of crop-haired infant Basques, in the sepulchral gloom of the Olhagarray salon, deporting themselves politely through the minuet, bowing to each other until their full, short black aprons stood out straight behind, exposing starched underwear, or whirling about in arm's-length couples, fat legs twinkling, small toes carefully arched and pointed, in what she presently recognized as an exposition of the waltz, as waltzes may have been danced when the world was young.

But she ceased to laugh when Mademoiselle Chiquita, forgetting by degrees her bashfulness before so distinguished an audience, presently took her castanets and fan and a fringed shawl to show her pupils very seriously how the bolero is danced at the Feria in Seville. . . . Where in her sheltered, bleak existence had the little old gentlewoman learned such abandon of pose, such languid lure of expression in hands and feet and beckoning eyes? Emily could not associate this lissome, swaying figure with the decent, prim, black-clad lady she had sometimes noted at mass among her black-clad sisters; all three of them wearing antiquated hats, in distinction from their humbler neighbors, who wore only a veil or a scarf upon the head, peasant-fashion. She asked Mademoiselle Eulalie whether her sister had learned to dance like this from the nuns at their convent school.

"On the contrary!" replied the other, evidently startled by the idea, and volunteered the information that Chiquita's instructress had been none other than Pilar de Maytie, famous for her dancing beyond the valleys.

"Ah, no, she was naturally no *friend* of ours! . . . our dear papa was extremely particular about our associates. But we were neighbors; and with the windows opposite so close, as you can see, it was impossible not to observe much that went on in the House Ducontentia. Particularly since Madame Pilar, knowing that we watched, was kind enough

never to drop her jalousies," added Mademoiselle Eulalie, simply.

Yes, it was often good as a play, she admitted; they three sitting in their own dark windows, looking on at all the gayety; and afterward Chiquita, still in the half-dark lest their papa return home suddenly, would take her fan and scarf and imitate each motion before the mirrors, until she might have been Pilar herself, dancing for all the gentlemen. "Which Heaven forbid!" added Eulalie, crossing herself. "Our dear papa would have been quite horrified had he known; so we did not tell him. But—sometimes I have wondered if it was a sin to keep from him the knowledge of Chiquita's dancing?" People, for some reason, often grew confidential with this young Madame Urutty. "You do not think it was a sin, Madame?"

Emily replied gravely that she did not think the sin was mortal, nor even venial; though their papa, being such a devoted parent, would doubtless have been gratified to know that his daughters enjoyed so innocent an amusement.

"Pleasures of the body are never innocent," sighed Eulalie, shaking her head in gentle reproof; and Teresa sighed in agreement. For herself, she had to confess to the sin of gluttony, she said; also of secret pride. "For I cannot conceal from myself that my *gaufrettes* seem lighter and have more delicate a flavor than those of our good neighbor Pantchika," she admitted shamefacedly. "But Chiquita

has atoned for her share in the deception of our father; she makes an Act of her dancing."

"An Act?" murmured Emily, mystified, not as yet entirely accustomed to Catholic phraseology.

"*Mais oui!* A gift, you understand, an offering to Our Lady of Sorrows—as if one were to put candles on the altar, for a special intention." It seemed to Emily rather a pretty fancy, one that must be especially cheering to Our Lady of Sorrows. "And in addition," went on the practical Teresa, "the money for the dancing lessons goes to Monsieur le Curé for his poor."

So that the infant Wally, it appeared, in learning to point his toes, and bow from the stomach, and twirl his fat little person about like a dizzy top was taking part in a quite religious ceremony.

Emily suggested that Mademoiselle Teresa make an Act also of her *gaufrettes;* and so atone at least for the sin of secret pride, if not of gluttony. But Mademoiselle Teresa replied doubtfully that she had never heard of *gaufrettes* as an offering for the altar; she would have to consult Père Marcós about it.

One morning in the early spring, among the soft wild calls of returning merle and bluebird and throstle, Emily heard approaching the house the high falsetto cry of Hermose the umbrella mender, arriving at a brisk trot and warning his patrons in advance, so that time should not be wasted. It was not often that the donkey of Hermose stirred from its accustomed amble, and the present accelerated

pace spoke of a certain excitement on the part of its rider; so that Emily managed to be conveniently in the kitchen when Hermose set up his apparatus just inside the door. First, as was his wont, he accepted ale, and politely emptied some on the hearthstone; unaware, good Catholic that he was, of performing a rite of sacrifice as ancient and pagan as his race itself. Then, while he inspected, approved, rejected, shook a doubtful head over umbrellas offered for his consideration, he began to talk. Like all great conversationalists, he did not come to his point in too much of a hurry; but in due time he remarked, "Mesdames have doubtless heard that on yesterday one had in the village an arrival?"

"Well, well! so the baker's new wife had been delivered of her child? Of what sex?" demanded Madame Urruty, who took a proper matriarchal interest in these events. "Was the poor woman long in labor?"

But Hermose dismissed the mere potentialities of the bakeress' *accouchement* with a gesture of the hand. The arrival, he explained, had appeared among them suddenly, just like that!—in an automobile almost as large as the automobile of Monsieur Esteban; with less of glass about it, perhaps, but more of bright red paint, and open at the back so that all could see who rode; and the automobile was manipulated by one in a hat of finest Panama, who had in his mouth the largest and blackest of all cigars—

"This umbrella," Hermose interrupted himself

at the dramatic point, "will run, Madame, into money. One rib lacks, as you see, and the cover itself leaves something to be desired."

"Yes, yes, yes, you will ruin me yet, you and your ribs and new covers and what not!" grunted Madame Urruty. "Who was this person in the hat, with the blackest of cigars?"

Hermose gathered his hearers about him with one compelling glance; even Esteban, happening to pass the door with a load of fodder on his shoulders, paused to listen to the oracle.

"The gentleman with the Panama hat, and the black cigar between his teeth," said Hermose impressively, "was none other than the lost Hercule, son of Ramón Olhaiby, the blacksmith!"

More they could not extract from him. Whence the prodigal had returned, whether he had brought with him his mother's chicken money, stolen out of the hollow image of the Virgin; how he had so prospered, and why he had not returned before to exhibit his prosperity—these things were so far mere matters of conjecture; and Hermose dealt in history, not conjecture.

Fortunately the next day was Sunday, and not a member of Père Marcós' parish failed to attend the mass, save those who were dead or bedridden; for the fame of Hercule's return had been broadcasted, as such things are broadcasted only in remote places innocent of telephone.

Emily, frankly awaiting in the porch of the church the arrival of the Olhaiby family, found

beside her the ladies Olhagarray, also waiting; all gazing with interest across the Place at the large red touring car which stood at the door of the House Elizoaca. Doubtless the Olhaiby intended to make an effective entrance.

But the blacksmith's good taste was proof against such temptation. He emerged and crossed the Place on foot, like anybody, dressed in his Sunday suit, but with that foolish and fatuous grin on his features with which strong men dissemble emotion. Following him came, first, his little granddaughters, sedately but with sudden little skips of exaltation, and wearing each of them a hat—a splendid hat, trimmed lavishly in ribbon and in flowers. Behind them marched their mother, the widowed sister of Hercule, also in a hat, most suitably ornamented with ripe purple grapes; and at the end of the procession, leaning upon the arm of the restored prodigal, came Madame Olhaiby herself, in the hat of hats, laden with nodding plumes like a hearse, surmounting her long, unlovely countenance with somewhat the effect of the straw headgear horses wear in hot climates to protect themselves from sunstroke.

"One sees," remarked Madame Urruty to her neighbors, "that a little prosperity has gone literally to the heads of these good people. Hats, indeed! What next?"

But Mademoiselle Chiquita responded kindly, "How charming they all look in them!"—thinking the while that her own well-preserved straw might

be the better for a touch of bright ribbon or perhaps a bunch of cherries underneath the brim.

This dazzling display of millinery, however, was forgotten in the appearance of Hercule himself; a powerful great figure like the older Olhaiby's, moving with a slight limp, whose already broad shoulders were accentuated by a padded coat of bright blue serge, whose elegant Panama sat jauntily to one side of a grayed and curling head, and whose feet were encased in brilliant patent leathers, with the extra half inch of heel which invariably betrays a Latin extraction. But for the heels, Hercule was very, very American. He looked like the caricature of a prosperous ward politician; and he moved among his people with an air of careless elegance, dispensing handshakes and friendly waves and now and then a flashing smile, whose vanity was quite disarming in its boyishness.

Only when he came opposite the Urruty family and the ladies Olhagarray did he remove the Panama from his head, with a gesture as magnificent as if it, like that of his mother, were laden with sweeping plumes.

"Aha, mesdames—messieurs!" he murmured impressively. "*A vos services!*"

Esteban smiled, and held out a cordial hand. "So, Hercule, I see that you also have been to America?"

"*Mais oui!*—sure t'ing, Esteban!" He used the name as respectfully as if it had been a title. "To become rich, it is obligatory to go to American, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"I hope that you at least have become rich enough," remarked Madame Urruty bluntly, "to return to your mother her chicken money, which you stole out of the plaster virgin?"

Hercule's complacency was proof against even this home thrust. "*Sans doute,* madame! With interest up to date," he imparted, his proud gaze sweeping the circle of interested listeners.

It faltered a little, however, as it rested upon Emily; who at the same moment repressed an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, if it isn't—" She stopped short, aware of a certain imploring quality in the blue gaze fixed upon her; that pure horizon blue one finds so rarely except among Basque hillsmen and Breton fisherfolk; the color of far vision across untrammeled space.

Hercule, his mother on his arm, his shrewish features softened into a blur of tearful happiness, limped on into the church and up the stairs to sit among the men in the tribunes, while the women remained below; and no one, Emily included, failed that day to offer a prayer of thankfulness for the restoration to the Olhaiby of their son, and of the chicken money with interest up to date.

On the way home Esteban asked Emily quietly where she had seen Hercule before; his eye never missed anything which concerned his wife. She told him about a certain modest health resort up in the Jura, where the waters were excellent for the system and the prices excellent for the pocketbook, to

which the Weldons, father and daughter, had been often wont to retire for recuperation between seasons; and the hotel they patronized, which was in fact a *pension,* had been made possible for Mr. Weldon's fastidious taste by the services of a lame and willing giant known locally as the Little One, who combined in his sole person the duties of boots, valet, porter, concierge, and on occasion *maître d'hôtel.* Emily recalled that her father had said of him: "It takes a Basque to make a perfect servant"—high praise from Archibald Weldon! He had once offered to procure for the Little One a situation elsewhere, more in keeping with his abilities.

But the Little One had, it appeared, no ambitions along the line of perfect servitude; the blood of possible Phœnician forebears was strong in him, and he yearned only to go down to the sea in ships. Again and again he had offered himself as able seamen; but his lame leg—it had been injured during the war, and long neglect in a German prison had put it out of commission entirely—kept him from qualifying.

Emily had recognized the Little One on sight; the lithe yet burly frame, the singularly innocent blue mountain eyes, beneath a thatch of graying curls; and, for confirmation, the unmistakable rocking limp.

"It is my belief," she said, "that your friend Hercule has never been to America at all! has merely understudied the rôle, rather badly, from passing guests of the Pension William Tell."

"But, those clothes?" demurred her husband. "And all the money he spends? One does not gain a fortune, my heart, by acting as general factotum at a Swiss *pension*, even if it is patronized by Americans."

The matriarch remarked shrewdly that it would not take much of a fortune to impress the village; the mere return of the chicken money would have been sufficient for that. As for all those hats, she commented, doubtless they were *démodés*, and he was able to buy them up quite cheaply.

"You saw him in the Jura, you say? So near to his home, and never returning for so much as a feast-day visit?" Surely that was unnatural! If Hercule had come by a fortune truly, and in honorable ways, why had his parents heard nothing from him in all these years? "*Na, na, na,* you must bring this young man to me to explain himself!" she concluded, sternly.

Hercule was accordingly brought to her, automobile, cigar and all, his father lingering proud but bashful in the background. He admitted without demur, even with eagerness, that he was the same useful person Emily remembered, and seemed delighted to be recognized by her thus in private. He inquired solicitously for monsieur her father, and genuine tears came into his eyes at news of Mr. Weldon's death. In the creed of Archibald Weldon, it had always been more important to fee the servants than to pay the bill.

"So, you have for years been living within a day's

journey of your parents, without returning to them, or even communicating with them? How is this?" demanded Madame Urruty.

Hercule murmured something in an embarrassed voice about lacking the money for railroad fare.

"And why could you not have walked?" She bit her lip suddenly, realizing why he could not have walked.

The great fellow hung his head and scrabbled with his boot in the dust, like a scolded child. He was ashamed to come, he admitted at last. "If I were to return without the money, I was afraid the *maman* would beat me!"—Madame Olhaiby was a trifle over five feet tall.

"A beating would do you no harm, I dare say," replied the matriarch, unsmiling; and was off on another tack. Was it as servant in a Swiss *pension* that he gained the fortune he now displayed?

"But no, madame," replied Hercule with a return of dignity; it was in America; and—if mesdames would be so good as to say no more about his services in the Pension William Tell? Mesdames would doubtless understand—his blue eyes pleaded with Emily—that there were certain episodes of the past which a man of property had gained the right to ignore.

Emily was puzzled by this unexpected touch of snobbery; while the matriarch frowned sharp disapproval. "What have we here? Since when is a man of these valleys ashamed of honest service to whoever is to be served—his parents, his master,

his God? Were you not a good servant to this *pension? Bien!*—my granddaughter has said you were. It is enough. What strange notions have you picked up in America? I ask myself! Presently we shall have you too 'proud' to admit that your father here makes shoes for horses—eh?"

Hercule protested with indignation. He, ashamed of his father's profession, when an Olhaiby had been *manichalak* to that village since the memory of man? There was nobody in the world who shod a hoof as did his father; nor who played so active a *pelota;* nor who at over sixty years could lift in his arms a half-grown colt as he had seen his father do only that morning. He, Hercule, ashamed of being the blacksmith's son? "*Dame,* not I!" While he retained a respectful manner, his blue eyes shot fire at Madame Urruty.

It was the blacksmith himself who came to the rescue, explaining quietly that his son had the envy now to marry himself ambitiously; that was why he did not wish it advertised that he had been nothing more than a servant in the Swiss *pension.*

"But name of a name, what of that?" cried the old lady, in growing impatience. It was well indeed for him to return to the valleys for a wife; it was even creditable—so long as he did not expect a bride in her first youth. What decent girl would care how he had earned his living, since he had earned it? That crippled leg—she inspected it critically—was more a matter of concern. Not every able-bodied woman would be willing to take a husband who was a cripple.

It was Emily who winced at her bluntness; not Hercule. "One is not as much of a cripple as appears, madame!" he remarked proudly, flexing his enormous biceps till the sleeve of his coat burst.

The matriarch nodded careless approval. In that case, she said, there was the niece of the baker, a good, strong girl who had a harelip and could not afford to be too squeamish; or there was the miller's daughter down the valley, who had mourned her fiancé, killed in the war, quite long enough, and would be better now for a husband. There was even Pantchika of the inn, who having buried two husbands already had doubtless formed the taste for having a man about—and what a cook!

But his son, remarked the blacksmith, fancied none of these. Hercule had the envy, he repeated with significance, to marry ambitiously. In America he was owner of a fine farm, a vineyard, an orchard, a sailing boat, what not?—including a house with a bathroom to it. Naturally for such an establishment one sought a suitable chatelaine. Hercule desired, *enfin,* to marry an aristocrat.

The other smiled. "Ah, ah, an aristocrat, *hein?* Yes, I remember; he formed early a taste for such!" Hercule looked at her gravely, and inclined his head; he was not ashamed of his early devotion to Pilar de Maytie. "It is a pity the daughters of my son are still too immature," went on Madame Urruty, with sarcasm. "Possibly Madame la Comtesse des Luynes would have suited? She is unfortunately

dead. There are no other marriageable ladies of quality in the vicinity, I think?"

"There are," said Hercule calmly, "*las Señoritas.*"

Madame Urruty burst out laughing. "There are also the holy saints in the picture there, and the little cherubim that fly about without their bodies! Come, come, Olhaiby, do not allow your son to make you ridiculous! Go into the kitchen, both of you, and ask them there for what you like to drink. We will say no more of this ambition. The war has indeed made strange differences in society, one hears! But with us here in the valleys, *grâce à Dieu*, one has no society."

It occurred to Emily that for so confirmed a democrat, the matriarch's point of view was hardly consistent. But matriarchs, perhaps, do not need to be consistent. . . .

Hercule's return, together with the thrusting season, had set afoot unparalleled social activities in their valley. Saints' days were celebrated in bewildering succession, and with early pagan rites which would have doubtless embarrassed the modest Christian participants, had they but realized their full significance. It was the season throughout nature of love-making and matchmaking. Honoring the charming month of Mary, processions of little girls with candles in their hands and wreaths of flowers and wisps of veil on their heads—in the pretty guidance of older white-clad girls, and of fluttering, child-faced nuns—were to be seen wending their way toward the roadside shrines, singing;

Yainkoaren Anna,
Anna guyizona,
Dezagem maita,
Bethi! Bethi! *

Feats of manly prowess were much in evidence; deeds of derring-do. There were wrestling matches, and games of bowls in the street, and running events; and always, of course, at any hour, anywhere, the *pelota.* Life, as the days grew warmer and the trees burst into blossom and leaf, became one long ecstatic celebration of gratitude on the part of these Children of the Sun.

Emily never forgot the Maypole festival of the pupils of Mademoiselle Chiquita, in the public square, given in order that parents might see for themselves the progress of their children; where her own young Wally made his first public appearance, solemn and blissful, footing a solitary nimble little *saut Basque* all his own; which he forgot in the middle at sight of his mother's astonished face, rushing to throw himself into her arms, a conquering hero.

The ladies Olhagarray were much in evidence on that occasion; Mademoiselle Chiquita hurrying about in a thin white girlish frock of long ago, cheeks pink, hair somewhat disarranged with the excitement,

* *Mother of God,*
Mother all good,
How we love you,
Always! Always!

mechanically calling out "one-two, one-two" like an impassioned metronome; taking a hand here, there; flinging herself into the breach with a few graceful steps to show the way; far too busy and happy and important to be shy, for once. Emily caught herself hoping that if Hercule still had the envy to marry himself ambitiously, he was not missing the Maypole festival.

Nor was he. When the affair was done, and Mademoiselle Chiquita sat taking a well-earned rest, surrounded by her sisters, as always, Emily noted Hercule issuing from the inn door behind them, balancing a salver, on one hand—betraying gesture—containing a bottle of pink *sirop*, a carafe of water, and three tall glasses. These attentions the ladies Olhagarray received with surprised, stiff little gestures of gratitude. Hercule lingered a moment, hoping perhaps that they would suggest a fourth glass for himself; but the Señoritas were somewhat unskilled in the acceptance of masculine gallantries.

Hercule in person added in no small measure to the general air of spring festivity. It was known that he had come home seeking a wife, a quest his former neighbors regarded with sympathy and approval. While his stiff leg prevented him from entering the more active social events, he was an adept at wrestling; and on a certain memorable occasion he took two falls in succession out of Esteban Urruty, only to take a fall himself later at the hands of his own father; an act of filial piety which deeply endeared him to the spectators.

The ladies Olhagarray were present at this spectacle, nor did they blench at it; though Emily herself turned white and sick at sight of the sheer physical agony on her husband's laughing face before he at last made the signal of surrender. Evidently the bullfight furnished good schooling for maiden sensibilities.

There had been beauty, too, despite the skilled brutality of the struggle; those splendidly muscled bodies writhing and twisting together, pliant as tigers; the grace of every movement, the smiling indifference to pain that seemed to her more civilized nerves incredible. Esteban's lean athlete's body was slender as a lad's beside the other's tremendous strength, nor was he a match for the older man in sheer agility; the tossing of heavy trunks and the expert balancing of trays had kept Hercule apparently in form. It occurred to Emily, quite primitively, that a man so powerful as this would have no difficulty in taking care of any woman, even a *dame de qualité;* she recalled, too, Hercule's curious gentleness with the invalids at the *pension;* his large and quiet patience, like the patience of a great kind dog, with his mother's fretful hectoring.

Once, during the wrestling match with Esteban, she had noticed the lips of Mademoiselle Chiquita moving in silent prayer. Afterward she asked mischievously for which contestant were her prayers?

"For both, my dear," answered the little lady simply. "I prayed that neither of them should defeat the other—such beautiful young men!"—al-

though it was many years since Hercule could have been called with justice a beautiful young man.

"What a pity," murmured Emily by way of experiment, "that the blacksmith's son should be a cripple!"

Mademoiselle Chiquita turned wondering eyes upon her. "He, a cripple? You call that splendid figure of a man a cripple? Myself, I do not notice the slight limp; I find it even distinguished; like the rolling gait of a sailor." The heroes of her maiden fancy had inevitably been sailors.

Emily smiled to herself; this was as it should be. More and more, as matrimony grew upon her, Emily inclined toward matchmaking. She was becoming as cosmically minded as the matriarch, as the spring itself; envisaging the entire animal kingdom, human and otherwise, in terms of two-and-two.

But her matronly beneficence received a check when she learned, presently, the manner of Hercule's fortune making. He was apparently quite frank about it, even proud of it; and Lastra reported it to Emily quite as a matter of course.

The earlier portion of those Ulysses wanderings were shrouded in mystery, so far as the village was concerned. She heard rumors of bad luck at the cards; of savings foolishly invested; of lotteries that failed to oblige, of horses who did not run as they had been expected to run—all the misfortunes so likely to happen to any Basque who wanders too far from the home valley, Lastra informed her. And then, as luck will do, luck had changed for

Hercule. He had at last achieved his ambition to go down to the sea in ships; not in proper Basque fashion, as sailor or fisherman, but as friend and companion to a sick American millionaire who feared to recross the sea alone.

"Hercule was always kind with the unfortunate," explained Lastra. "He has a heart of wax."

And thus before Hercule had opened up opportunity, a vista of unguessed usefulness and profit. America, it appeared, was suffering from a great thirst, *un soif d'enfer*. "The more they are rich, the more they suffer," said Lastra. "Picture to yourself—in all that desert land no wine, no beer, no cognac, not so much as a jug of hydromel! What then do they drink? Only cider? But too much cider, madame, is like a knife among the entrails!"

Not so much of a knife, Emily murmured, as some of the substitutes with which her unfortunate countrymen were attempting to quench the unquenchable.

So Hercule had learned, reported Lastra gravely. It seemed, then, a charity, almost a Christian duty, to supply these suffering rich with such comfort as the good God intended all men to enjoy. All that needed was a certain audacity, a certain knowledge of the sea, and a certain acquaintance with the market. These Hercule was able to provide; his American friend and patron had provided a fast little coastwise sailing vessel which minded its helm as a good horse minds the snaffle; and so for a season Hercule, on the shores of an alien continent, fulfilled his natural Basque functions of navigator, smuggler,

and corsair in general, with great content and profit. His career was presently nipped in the bud by the *garde civile*. It had been necessary, to keep himself out of prison, to pay the *garde civile* a sum whose greatness the ears of madame would hardly credit! groaned Lastra; but fortunately an even greater sum had already been invested on the far side of that wide country, where Hercule was not known to the *garde civile*, and where it had occurred to him that native vineyards might be made to yield an even greater profit than the imported product. One had only to grow grapes; and if those who bought the grapes did not understand the proper use of them, who but Hercule would instruct their ignorance? True, one had laws; but one had always foolish laws in every land to be evaded, *n'est-ce pas?* Else how would lawyers live?

Emily felt a certain sympathy with Hercule's point of view; but she feared that the ladies Olhagarray might prove more strait-laced.

Esteban reassured her, however. Grinning, he told her a bit of history: When Don Licerio took his wife and daughters yearly to San Sebastian for the bullfight, it was noticeable that the ladies returned to their home much fatter than when they left. It was noticeable to everybody, most of all to the custom officers, who nevertheless hardly dared to suggest disrobing the ladies Olhagarray. "Not that Don Licerio wanted the laces and shawls and whatnot he brought to his home in this fashion; the house is bursting with such rubbish. But it is galling

to the spirit of any Eskuala to feel that persons of the same race, the same nation, must pay fines and duties to each other, without their consent, merely because a few mountains happen to lie between their dwellings! . . . No, no, *gatchutcha*, it is not because of any such lawbreaking that the Señoritas will decline the addresses of Hercule! if he shows the temerity to make them."

A few days later Emily learned that Hercule had indeed shown the temerity to make them. It was her father-in-law who brought the news; he having been approached by the Olhaiby, in the absence of parents and godparents. Monsieur Urruty, in turn, approached the ladies Olhagarray—an alcalde has varied duties.

"Incredible as it may appear, they accept the fellow!" smiled Pedro, rather gravely.

"What, all of them?" laughed Emily. "I suppose you mean Chiquita accepts?"

Yes, said Pedro, it was indeed Chiquita who had approved the arrangement, she being the most outspoken of the sisters. "But," he added, "it is not Chiquita, naturally, who will marry Hercule; it is Eulalie, the eldest."

Emily gasped. "Eulalie! That withered little frozen nun of a woman? Impossible, Pedro! You must have misunderstood. It *could* not have been Eulalie for whom Hercule asked!"

The alcalde, lifting his eyebrow, replied that Hercule had not specified; it was honor enough for him,

surely, to be accepted by any Olhagarray; and since Eulalie was the eldest—

Emily's face went blank with dismay. Poor Hercule! Poor little sweet, self-sacrificing Chiquita! "Oh, *oh!*" she cried, stamping her foot, "how the best of men can manage to bungle everything, if they are given the chance!"

The family stared in alarm; never before had they seen this cool, imperturbable Emily in such unseemly temper. "But calm yourself, my child!" soothed the matriarch. "*Sois tranquille!*—it is after all not our affair. Remember that you nurse a young baby!"

"Oh, bother my young baby!" groaned Emily, appallingly, and ordered a car that she might hurry down to the village and play *dea ex machina.*

She arrived too late for the rôle. A stir of interested excitement was visible in the Calle Mayor, where Lastra, making no pretense of cobbling, leaned upon his half door frankly angling for society.

"Aha!" he greeted her with a wag of the head. "One sees why madame has come! Half the women are already above, celebrating the *fiançailles*, and the others will arrive as soon as they have changed their aprons. But enter, enter! Who more welcome than madame's self, to tell about the customs American?"

The salon upstairs was indeed buzzing like a hive, the ladies Olhagarray having been suddenly transformed into heroines. In the center of the sofa sat the fiancée, pale with emotion and fright, while

her sisters hovered solicitously about her, as if she had already become a creature apart, superior; as the married are always superior to the unwed.

"Ah, madame, you have heard?" cried Chiquita, hurrying eagerly to greet Emily. "Is it not *épatant?* The marriage will occur as soon as possible, since Monsieur Hercule returns at once to his affairs. What romance! Our sister is to go, our own Eulalie, out to the uttermost ends of earth, to the very edge of the sunset!—as Monsieur Hercule so beautifully puts it; where there is a vineyard facing the sea—not our sea, you comprehend, but one quite as imposing—and a sailing boat which belongs to Monsieur Hercule, and an orange grove which smells like a bouquet. There is also a house, not so large as this, but more cheerful, with roses climbing even to the roof—picture it!—and water running hot and cold from pipes, as with you, and a stove that cooks in some miraculous way without fire. Myself I do not understand, I am too stupid—but things are like that in America. And our sister will be never lonely, says Monsieur Hercule, because there are many neighbors there, other than savages—even Basques! And those who work in his vineyards speak the Spanish, like anybody. So you see she *cannot* be lonely; with such a fine, strong husband, too!"

Evidently the glamour of far places had quite outweighed any aristocratic prejudice with regard to the blacksmith's son. Emily doubted whether even a knowledge of his humble services at the Pension William Tell could have daunted Chiquita's

sense of high adventure. She recognized the true spirit of the pioneer, the empire builder; here was such an heroic, gallant woman as those who have carried civilization, following each her man, beyond the world's outposts.—And instead the man was taking Eulalie!

Emily essayed one faint protest: "But why Mademoiselle Eulalie, instead of——one of you others?"

"Why not?" was the reasonable reply. "She is the eldest; Monsieur Hercule did not specify—"

Possibly she sensed some unspoken dismay in the other's mind, for she became quite discursive, with a most unusual breaking down of her shy reserve. The poignant voice—voices so often betray what words do not—told Emily what she had feared: Mademoiselle Chiquita might have been very glad, perhaps, if Hercule had specified.

"Eulalie, you comprehend, has been so less happy in her life than we others. In youth she wished to enter religion; her vocation was very strong. But papa would not permit—our papa," she explained deprecatorily, "was not entirely a devout person. Also, when certain gentlemen proposed to him for our hands, it was not—it happened never to be Eulalie for whom they asked. So, life for her has been less amusing than for us others. We two have had so much!—Teresa her chickens, her flowers, her ménage; I, the children, the precious babies, new every year—in that one is more fortunate than a real mother! There is also the dancing—it is per-

haps foolish how much pleasure one takes in dancing," she confessed, "considering that the knees will soon begin to stiffen. No, even were she not the eldest, it was for our cherished Eulalie to embrace this opportunity; not for us!"

"Dear little mademoiselle—" Emily could go no further, something caught in her throat.

Nor did she dare take up the matter with Hercule. After all, they were strangers to her, these people, this race; he might for all she knew be quite content with his bargain, grateful enough, as Pedro indicated, to be accepted by an Olhagarray. She found something rather touching in the determination of this great simple fellow, who had loved a lady in his youth, to be content thereafter with nothing less than ladyhood; typified to his memory, no doubt, by the Señoritas; their delicate reserve, their slender hands and feet, their gentle manners; even their duenna, and the family carriage in which they drove so elegantly to mass.

Hercule, indeed, seemed quite gratified, though rather subdued by the magnitude of his performance. Betrothal gifts were exchanged; the blacksmith's son sported upon a lively waistcoat the fob and seals of the haughty Don Licerio himself; who must have turned in his grave at the horrid sight. Mademoiselle Eulalie exhibited, upon request, the esmeralda ring of betrothal set in the American fashion with a large single diamond. There were also three great rolls of silk, which Chiquita showed to Emily in consultation, one of crimson, one of pink, and one

of royal purple. These, explained Chiquita, Monsieur Hercule desired to have made into costumes for his bride; it being an American custom, on holidays, for ladies even of the highest *ton* to appear in colors other than black. . . . "A custom doubtless borrowed from the aborigines?" she inquired, doubtfully.

It was Chiquita who took upon herself all the necessary arrangements, who busied herself eagerly with affairs of the trousseau, who even allowed herself to be fitted for the wedding dresses, since both were of one size; Chiquita who selected for her sister what seemed most suitable out of the three great dower chests in which the ladies Olhagarry had long been laying away their treasures of lace and linen, against hope. One would think, smiled the neighbors behind the hand, that it was Mademoiselle Chiquita herself who was about to marry! . . . But she had always been the moving spirit in her family.

Banns were read from the pulpit for the espousals of Hercule, son of Ramón Olhaiby the blacksmith, with Mademoiselle Maria Teresa Eulalie, daughter of Don Licerio Olhagarray, of the House Arahaïa; whose grandfather had been gentleman in waiting to the King of Spain.

Certainly it was too late to interfere; but once, encountering Hercule limping rather thoughtfully along the road, his Panama set well on the back of his graying curls, his lips puckered for a whistle which did not come, his blue eyes lighting with eager

pleasure at sight of her, Emily could not resist temptation.

"My friend, you are still almost a young man, as men go!" she said abruptly.

"You bet, madame," respectfully replied Hercule, who loved his English. "We remain long young, we Olhaiby! The father of my father gained nearly a hundred years before he died, and then it was a death of accident: a ski broke under him as he attempted the gorge."

"But mademoiselle your fiancée," said Emily, nerving herself to the attack, "is not young at all, as women go! You are sure you are not making a mistake?"

Hercule shrugged, and became confidential. "You see, it is like this. Me, I do not care for women—as women, you comprehend? I want only one who will make for me a home, a good Basque home, in the new country. Having associated with persons of quality, like yourself, like your noble father—eh, *alors*, one acquires a taste for persons of quality, *n'est-ce pas?* Yet, one does not ask for the moon! Also, a wife of an age one is compelled to respect is safer for a person of my disposition; more steadying—you receive me, madame? For a man of property there are temptations—the cards, the lottery, the horses—*hélas!* how much honest sweat of the brow I have seen go up in smoke! It is well for one of such a temperament as mine, living apart from his parents, from persons with authority over

him, to select a wife who will exercise authority in their place—"

"Who will, in fact, become a mother to him," murmured Emily, smiling a little. "I understand, Hercule. But—you are fond of children, are you not? I have seen you with them." . . . And indeed the great fellow went about the village, as about the Pension William Tell, with children attached like limpets to his person.

His face softened. "Me, am I fond of little ones? But naturally, madame! Sure t'ing! Wherever I am, there will be children. The Mexicanos who work in my vineyards, the neighbors living near—they have many little ones. And do you know what they already call me, there *chez moi?*" His wide gesture indicated all California. "They call me 'Papa Hercule.' A man who is called 'Papa Hercule' has less need of children for himself than other men, madame!"

Her mind turned with a pang to the picture of Chiquita and her dancing class; little Mademoiselle Chiquita, who felt herself more fortunate than most mothers, because there were new babies for her every year. These two, so obviously meant for each other, so inevitably following divergent paths!—for on what possible excuse could the man exchange his affianced bride for another? The thought saddened her beyond tears.

The day before the wedding day, however, she chanced upon a person whom it saddened even more, apparently.

She had formed a habit, in passing through the village, of slipping into the old church sometimes for a moment of rest; not devoutly perhaps—her Catholicity was a matter of courtesy rather than of deep conviction—but reverently enough; aware of a strange and soothing calm that enveloped the bare, still place, with its votive ship suspended as in all churches of seafaring people, the queer signs and inscriptions on its *yarleku,* those stones where women kneel who mourn their dead. The ancient Madonna on her altar was dressed that day like a Spanish lady, all in black: with a black lace mantilla, and a lace-edged handkerchief held between her folded hands.

From without came pleasant, busy sounds of hammering, where the blacksmith had conceived the happy idea of erecting arches of flowers all along the street for the bride of his son to pass beneath, when she came on the morrow to her nuptials. Within, as Emily sat half praying, wordlessly as happy women do, remembering her own nuptials, she became aware of a sound quite near, stifled but unmistakable: the sound of sobbing. On the lower steps of the Madonna altar she saw a figure almost prostrate, in a complete abandonment of grief; and to her dismay she saw that the figure wore a hat. Except for the first triumphal appearance of the Olhaiby family, displaying the gifts of Hercule, none of the village women wore hats, except the ladies Olhagarray. In a flash of painful insight,

Emily realized that this piteous figure must be Mademoiselle Chiquita.

Her first instinct—the instinct of her world, her training—was to slip hastily away, unseen. But a deeper instinct warned her that there are times when we must be our brother's keeper. She knelt beside the prostrate form, and put an arm around it.

"My dear, my dear!" she whispered. "I know, I understand—"

A sodden face lifted itself to her helplessly, too desperate for surprise; and Emily gave a great start. It was not Chiquita; it was the bride Eulalie.

There in the dim quiet, at the foot of Our Lady of Sorrows, all barriers of race and age and custom went down before the need of woman for woman. Emily got the whole story; more of it than she wanted, more than Eulalie knew she was telling: her fear, almost her hatred of the brute called man, his rough, coarse voice, the horrid bristles on his chin, the smell of wine on his breath—Don Licerio had evidently been an affectionate father, in his cups. . . . "How can women bear to marry the creatures? How can I bear?" . . . And to go away with one of them, quite alone, forever! to live with him, as his wife, in a land where there were no friends, no sisters—she who had never in her life been out of reach of her sisters' touch in the dark, since they slept all together in one great bed for warmth. . . .

There was another thing, something which Emily's experience did not entirely fit her to understand:

the sense of dedication, of belonging already to a spouse not of this earth.

"You see," whispered the poor lady again and again, "I had a vocation; I have always felt I had a vocation! Only our papa would not permit." How would a wife, how would she herself feel, she demanded of Emily, if they took her from Esteban, her lover, and commanded her to wed another, to belong always to another? She shivered in the girl's arms; and Emily shivered in sympathy. "A bride of quietness," she quoted to herself, "a bride of quietness—"

But aloud she said firmly, "Listen, my dear! It would have been better for you to tell them from the first how you felt—your priest, your sisters—how you hated the thought of marriage. But it is not too late yet! Come, we must do something, at once!"

The other drooped lower and lower. "I have not the courage. Chiquita would never understand, she is so brave; Teresa would think of all the scandal; Père Marcós would scold because I have not taken this to confession. . . . No, no, you are most kind; but this is my burden to bear alone. I—I must make an Act of it."

Emily, however, was thinking the burden by no means hers to bear alone; and thinking very fast. "Listen!" she said again, urgently: "To marry feeling as you feel now would be no sacrament, but a mortal sin!" She was glad of her slight acquirement of Catholic phraseology.

Eulalie shrank back, gasping. "Ah, madame! Ah, no!"

"Yes, a *mortal* sin," repeated Emily impressively. "I am sure your confessor would tell you so. . . . But I can save you from it; I can save you both. Only trust me! And promise to do nothing, say nothing at all, whatever happens. Let people think what they choose. Have you courage enough for that—to let people think what they choose?"

Yes, Eulalie believed she had courage even for that; if only she did not have to marry anyone!

Emily left her where she knelt, still weeping, but no longer trembling so terribly, and hurried away to find Hercule. She caught sight of him through the swinging door of the *estaminet*, fortifying himself for the morrow's ordeal; and summoned him out to where they could talk together.

"Hercule, I want you to answer me something—quickly, without thinking at all, straight from the heart! Will you?"

"But perfectly, madame," was the trusting response; it was a source of pride to Emily that her husband's people invariably trusted her.

"If you had been allowed, Hercule, to choose among the Señoritas of your own accord, which would you have selected for your wife? Quickly, now—which?"

"But—naturally, Mademoiselle Chiquita!"

She patted his arm. "Good man! And why?"

By that time he had become uneasy, blushing and stammering and scrabbling with his boot. Why? He

could not say, he hardly knew—a certain lightness of the foot perhaps—the matter of a dimple—

"Hooray! Dimples forever!" cried Emily insanely; and laid before him her little plan. When she parted from Hercule, he looked completely dazed, but withal uplifted. He did not return to the *estaminet*.

She had, however, her difficulties with Mademoiselle Chiquita; whose hair was already up in curl papers against the morrow's event, and who could not believe her senses. Eulalie weeping? Eulalie wretched? Her own adored sister miserable because she was about to become the happiest of women? Incredible! Madame had heard it from Eulalie's own lips?

Emily did her best with the Catholic phraseology. She pointed out the position of a Spouse of Heaven about to be thrust into the arms of mortal man. "Fancy the feelings of Saint Catherine, for example" —the name came to her quite at random; for all she knew Saint Catherine had been several times a wife—"forced to marry a strange man who had come to drag her, as it were, from the familiar altar to his rough American cave! . . ."

Chiquita wiped away an awed tear at the thought. It was true, there had always been something singularly holy about their Eulalie. She had, indeed, the very look of the blessed saints.

"And I, who wished only for her happiness! I was about to force her to the sacrifice supreme!" Chiquita wept aloud; but only for a moment. "How-

ever, I learn in time. There is only one thing for it, madame. They must never marry!"

"My thought exactly," murmured Emily with satisfaction, glancing at the watch on her wrist. Time was flying. "But, consider the position of poor Hercule!" she went on craftily. "Deprived at the final moment of the wife he had every right to expect; forced to return alone to his vineyard, his orange grove, the house with roses on its roof. One owes something, certainly, to that good man? Consider the presents he has brought—the ring, the splendid silks!"

"These," sighed Chiquita, "shall be returned at once."

"But when they are already made into dresses . . . ?" questioned Emily; and suggested, diffidently, her own idea.

The other's cheeks flamed; her hands flew up to hide them. *She?* Madame felt it *her* duty to take the place of Eulalie? "I should die of shame! The talk, the scandal! They would say I—I had—had—oh, impossible! And suppose Monsieur Hercule were not agreeable to the arrangement?"

Emily assured her that Hercule was agreeable, more than agreeable; he even preferred it to the other. And everything came about so conveniently; the trousseau fitted one as well as the other; the name on the marriage license was even the same: Maria Teresa Eulalie. It was almost, declared Emily with inspiration, as if their papa, the Don, had foreseen some such contingency!

"You think that?" asked Chiquita earnestly. "You really think our dear papa. . . . But surely not! Madame jests!"

She continued to shake her head, to say that it was impossible—no, no, a thousand times *no!* But the dimple began to appear and reappear in her flushed cheek; and at last it took control entirely. She gazed at Emily; Emily gazed at her; and suddenly both began to laugh.

The rest was simple. Hercule, Emily promised, would be waiting behind the house with his automobile at the hour of dark, when *tout le monde* would be gossiping at the front doorstep; and in his strong and experienced arms he would carry down the traveling trunk of Eulalie, the dower chest as well; and she, Chiquita, would follow, saying not a word; and they would drive rapidly all night, straight through the warm June moonlight, to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, to the house of Emily's friend there, Miss Dibbs, an English lady who loved all sentiment and adventure; and she would arrange the rest. While herself a heretic, Miss Dibbs was one to understand the requirements of good Catholics.

All of which came duly to pass, to the delighted scandal of the community; where still the thrill of the Olhagarray elopement is discussed in whispers, with stress laid upon the Christian resignation of the martyred Eulalie, betrayed thus by her suitor and her sister practically at the altar steps.

The last that pair of gallant old adventurers into new youth saw of the home valley was the figure

of their *dea ex machina*, on a hilltop, outlined against the moonlight in the attitude of her own great Goddess of Liberty, hand upraised as in blessing; a goddess who laughed and cried a little, too, saying under her breath, in the Basque, as if they could hear—"*Gaou-one*, my little ones! . . . Good night; and oh, good hunting!"

SKY PASTURES

CHAPTER SIX

SKY PASTURES: wherein a boy learns to become a man

"IN MY opinion," remarked Madame Urruty, gazing inimically at the slim, long person of her youngest grandson, "that one hears bells."

It was one of the expressive peasant idioms her American granddaughter-in-law often found so apt, indicating that the hearer of bells was mentally not quite there; but as applied to Nacio, it surprised her, for it seemed to Emily that her husband's young half brother was mentally rather more than there. At the priests' college near Toulouse he stood so well in his studies, indeed, as to cause among his family a secret fear lest he intend to become a priest himself. Fortunately the period of his military service was near at hand; which should present, it was felt, a wholesome antidote.

"Regard him there," muttered the matriarch with impatience, "lying flat on his stomach in the middle of a morning, with a book under his nose. A book! You observe it? As if time were a thing which lasts forever!"

Emily reminded the old lady that time is a thing which lasts forever; it is only ourselves who change and pass.

"*Zut!*" said Madame Urruty. "In that case let

us hope this worthless *doguin,* this long-legged, idle puppy of a boy, will change and pass into something else as quickly as possible. What," she demanded in the vernacular, "is eating my grandson? I ask myself!"

Emily eyed the boy with a rather guilty feeling. She knew quite well what was eating him. She recognized the fat green volume which lay under his nose in the middle of a morning, among the pink heather and blue periwinkle of a hillside meadow, from which he occasionally lifted his head to shout stentorian and by no means ineffective orders at a number of people who were moving about in the field just below his vantage point.

It was not a learned volume; it had once belonged to herself, sole survivor of a youth much earlier and more brief than Nacio's, when she believed for a time not only in fairies but in knights *sans peur et sans reproche,* blameless Sir Galahads like the one in the Boston Library, who roamed the world on milk-white steeds, bearing a strong resemblance to Miss Ellen Terry, and seeking for damsels to be rescued from their dragons—or was it Saint Michael who specialized in that sort of thing? She had long since forgotten the details of that fat green book; but never the glamour of it, never the color of rose it cast for a while upon the middle of her own morning; until she graduated to Bernard Shaw, and Ibsen, and other authors whom her father considered more suitable for an intelligent young woman who had her way to make in society.

Oddly enough, she had, since her marriage, reverted to jejune tastes. Mr. Shaw seemed to her dry and old; he creaked a little. Ibsen's tragic profundities moved her to nothing more than pitying distaste. Perhaps she had outgrown tragedy and irony. She read the ultra-moderns, of course, from a sense of duty, having left a blanket order for them with her London bookseller; but read them smiling in her sleeve, thinking, "We know a thing worth two of that, Esteban and I"—as probably all happy married people read them, from Bath to Bathsheba.

So that she eyed Nacio now with a certain sympathy, not unmixed with approval. Where else in the civilized world today would one encounter a vigorous and healthy youth, in what approximated the sophomore year of college, who could lose himself for days at a time, without shame, in the sentimental innocencies of Tennyson's Idylls of the King?

Since her addition to the Urruty family, its younger member had developed a passionate enthusiasm for things Anglo-Saxon—customs, history and language. To them her background appeared as romantic, she realized, as theirs to her—"Foreign cows wear long horns." And she felt a certain responsibility devolving upon her, as sole representative of the Anglo-Saxon race in an alien civilization. Nacio, in particular, practiced this form of hero worship; borrowed, whenever possible, Esteban's London-made clothes; cultivated a stilted and cautious Oxford accent, in the fond belief that he spoke American; and announced his intention of going in

for, not *pelota* but tennis, or even a game known to his college as "futbal"—a curious hybrid sport which would have astonished both English cricketers and American followers of the pigskin.

Since Emily had given him to read what she explained was an English classic, the boy had been going about with a vague dreaminess of aspect, that bright yet clouded wistfulness which is seen at its best in the eyes of very young hound dogs. The bells he heard were undoubtedly the bells of "many-towered Camelot town." Sometimes, catching his eager and expectant vision fixed unseeingly upon herself, Emily was aware that her pale blondness figured for the moment as that of tragic Queen Guinevere, or the Lily Maid of Astolat, or the hapless Lady of Shalott. These were rôles difficult for a mere contented wife and mother to play up to; she began to consider filching back the Idylls of the King, and losing them.

It was the season for the irrigation of the fields: a simple enough process on the world's great watershed, where every gully, every path and roadway has its accompanying little stream of pure cold water, which may, by the removal of well-placed stones, be turned at will into the many runlets channeled for the purpose through every field. After the first abundant harvest, in July, this melted snow is turned for a while into all the cultivated area to refresh it from its labors; after which grasses and weeds and wild flowers spring up apace, with the vigor of the magic beanstalk.

Nacio, being on holiday, was making himself useful, according to the matriarchal decree, by acting as overseer of this labor; while all the men, women and older children in his grandmother's employ went splashing about in sabots, with bare legs and upturned garments, converting her tilled lands into temporary swamps, and enjoying the process as all human creatures, large or small, enjoy the excuse for dabbling in water; a remnant of the day, perhaps, when man was merely protoplasm, drifting about in paleolithic ooze.

Nacio as an overseer was hardly a success, although the fields managed to flood themselves as thoroughly as if he were. Esteban in his place, or Pedro, or even Madame Urruty, would have been down among them, as barelegged and wet and busy as the best; but Nacio, a more modern type of general, preferred to give his orders from headquarters.

"I think," muttered the matriarch, turning away, "that this young *fainéant* will make himself less conspicuously useless in the high pastures again, among the other muttons. At least his idleness will no longer offend the eye."

Emily ventured regretful protest; and Fancine, his mother, lifted up an aggrieved voice. The boy had served his apprenticeship with the flocks and herds; surely, after so long a time away from home with no more exciting company than that of beasts and priests, he was entitled to a little leisure in the bosom of his own family! But with the matriarch, as with others of strong will, opposition served only

as a fixative. Leisure, she observed, like high cheeses and old liqueurs, was not good for youth; it gave ideas; and ideas, she intimated, were something which required a better brain than her grandson's to cope with.

"At any moment," she continued calmly, "we shall have this puppy fancying himself in love with his brother's wife—have you not noticed the sheep's eyes he casts already at our Emilie? But no, you would notice nothing, my poor Fancine, being but his mother. . . . It is the age for a débâcle of some sort."

Emily opened her lips in startled expostulation, but closed them again; how was she to explain to this shrewd, observant, cynically kind old woman that it was not at her Nacio cast his sheep's eyes, but at Guinevere, at the fair Elaine, at the Lady of Shalott?

Nacio, however, seemed entirely content with his grandmother's edict of banishment. He was a docile youth, sweet-tempered like his father, with none of Esteban's masterful disposition.

"Up there," he said philosophically to Emily, "one has it more commodious, and with none of this eternal women's chatter about to disturb the thoughts."

Emily found the farm itself sufficiently commodious, almost too much so at times, since the only neighbor house in sight was the ruined tower of the ancient Etcheverray *maison forte*, L'Ey Kahatcia. It seemed to her that the boy was a little ungrateful, as well as unflattering; she had given a good deal of

personal attention to the making of their young brother's holiday.

"What, you won't miss us up there?" She could not resist asking. "Not Bette"—who was his slave and shadow—"nor old Damasa"—who was happy to be waked at any moment to tell her favorite the stories he loved of witches and demons—"nor even me, dear Nacio?" The instinct of the flirt dies hard.

"I shall have my dog," said Nacio simply. "Also the *métayer's* son, young Essetore, who takes his first year with the sheep. And as for you, *belle-sœur*, you I shall have with me always, everywhere; there even more than here, where we have Esteban to come between. You know how I am jealous of Esteban?"

She started. Was the matriarch right, as usual? Then, meeting the candid, adoring puppy gaze resting upon her so trustfully, she laughed in sheer relief. It was the head, she thought, of a Raphael seraph—the serious one—set on a figure by Michelangelo. Already the promise of a mustache shadowed Nacio's upper lip—a mustache which would never come to maturity, since Basques are invariably clean-shaven—but the flushed brown skin, the wide eyes, were soft and clear still as those of a young girl.

At this age, she realized, a boy is often far more beautiful than a girl; and, despite certain little masculine awarenesses, far more innocent.

"If I only had Excalibur about me I should dub you my very perfect knight," she smiled, touching his shoulder as if for the accolade. "Durandel, your

sword of Roland, would do even better. What has become of it, Nacio?"

"I buried it," he told her gravely, "when I became a man and went up to the pastures with the sheep. If you like, I will dig it up for you? But I have other things to show you there, *belle-sœur*. Will you come?"

She promised that she would. "We shall bring you a picnic soon, Bette and I and the baby people, with perhaps Monsieur Etcheverray"—who often accompanied them when Esteban could not. Since Bette's experience with the *cagots*, they were not allowed to leave the confines of the Urruty property without a man.

His eyes brightened eagerly. He wanted her to see the cave he had extended into a fine hut for himself, built out of bowlders, with the mountain for part of his roof and the rest of thatch. He had built furniture also, in the long lonely months—chairs, tables, bookshelves; his bed was made of the skins of wild animals—"Such a bed as Roland himself slept upon!"—and his chimney drew very well, with a hearth on which he cooked his meals.

"But my cave hut is a secret," he told her boyishly. "Only three people know of it: Bette, of course, and Esteban, and Monsieur Tubal."

"What, Etcheverray is in your confidence?" asked Emily, surprised; it would not have occurred to her that the absent-minded *littérateur* would be the confidant of boys.

"But certainly, he often comes to see me there.

The things I have collected interest him; also he has a friend in the village on the other side—a Monsieur Zubaïos. It was he," the boy added, "who taught me how to cook a hare in the pot, with savory wild herbs, as gypsies do. Monsieur Etcheverray has many accomplishments."

He told her something of the treasures of his cave hut: Bones he had found near by of animals larger than horses, perhaps of elephants—though how would elephants have mounted to the top of the Pyrenees?—queer old rusty weapons dug from the earth, which may have belonged to soldiers of Charlemagne; and things even more ancient—or so said Monsieur Tubal. Deep in the darkness at the far back of his cave, he had discovered a sort of table made of stones, which may have been a crude altar; and above it, almost gone, were faint traces of figures graven on the face of the rock, of men and of very strange beasts. There was also the imprint of a huge left hand, larger than hands are nowadays, with several finger joints missing; which Monsieur Tubal said was the hand mark of a sacrifice victim—Nacio paused abruptly.

"What eerie company!" exclaimed Emily. "What could the place have been—a cave temple, perhaps?"

"Perhaps," he said noncommittally.

She realized that he was retiring into the reserve with which Basques usually greet any research into their past, but she persisted. After all, her children were Basque.

"Could it have been a temple for the worship of Laxarrou of the high pastures?"

"No. He was for Eskuala peoples."

"And this is earlier than the Basque gods? Iberian, perhaps? Or Berber?"

"Earlier than that. The other people, from beyond." His brief gesture indicated the direction of the Atlantic Ocean. "It was they who worshiped in secret high places."

With a thrill of excitement she realized that by "the other people, from beyond" the boy was possibly suggesting inhabitants of the lost Atlantis, a prehistoric Cro-Magnon race from which many scientists believe Basques to be descended. It occurred to her that Nacio's discoveries might be of great scientific importance.

But he continued, with a firm change of subject, "And I have also there the body of my pet lamb, stuffed by myself, and the finest collection of bird eggs in the Haute Pyr!"

Emily smiled. "Is the lock on the door to be trusted with all these treasures, Nacio?"

There was no lock on the door, he answered in surprise; what need could there be of locks in the Haute Pyr? He had put a sign up over the entrance: "This is the house of Ignacio Urruty. Who enters is welcome. Go with God, and please to put out the fire before you leave." Naturally nobody, not even the gypsies, would take advantage of one who so trusted them.

Emily gazed in silence at this stalwart youth,

broad in the shoulders as his father, with muscles of tempered steel, a speaking acquaintance with Greek and Sanskrit and various things of which she had never heard, and a passion for fairy tales; thinking with Madame Urruty that the sky pastures were the only safe place for him.

But according to Damasa, they were no means safe. The *aïeta-anna* spent one entire evening wide awake in her chimney corner, with Nacio, Emily and Bette for audience, warning her favorite of dangers to be encountered in high places. In a house—particularly in the house of Madame Urruty—there was comparatively little danger; it would take a brave devil, intimated Damasa, to beard old Léocadie under her own rooftree. But out beneath the open sky—ah, then, beware of Deburria, and Trufadec, and all the rest! There were the Lamminak, those contrary-minded fairy folk, like the Irish Little People, who always meant the opposite of what they said, who led wayfarers astray with kind advice, and persuaded the cattle to go on strike to other pastures, and changed babies in their cradles, so that a mother would have to look sharp to know her own child. The reason there were so many witches and demons now abroad in the Soule and Labourd, explained Damasa in passing, was because the Christian missionaries were chasing them out of China.

And there were others who had always lived here: Fagus, for example—he of the beech tree—was he such a friend to man as man in his conceit liked to fancy? By no means! Who had not heard of per-

sons being killed by the sudden falling of a branch? And what man was fool enough to take shelter under a beech tree from a thunderstorm, for all its inviting spread of foliage? There was Laxarrou, god of the high pastures, who sometimes enchanted sheep, and folk, so that they could not be made to leave the hills; and Aherbelste, deity of the black rocks, who had sent many a careless climber hurtling to his doom. Even Baïgorisc, deity of the red earth, needed at times to be propitiated with sacrifice, for a good harvest; and the sacrifice Baïgorisc preferred, whispered Damasa horribly, was human flesh!

The possibilities of high adventure among these various demons and fairies and deities grew apace, and Nacio quite kindled to them.

"Tell Emily the story of the Snake Princess, Anna-Damasa," he urged. "I have forgotten it."

The crone gave them her version of a tale which is current among all mountain peasants about their own hills, from Scotland to the Caucasus, even to the Kentucky Cumberlands; the story of the enchanted princess turned by a wicked fairy into the semblance of a snake, who in order to be released from her spell must be kissed three times on the lips by a pure youth.

This Snake Princess, said Damasa, lived undoubtedly on top of one of the Pics Nerés, possibly Canigou, or the Pic d'Aine, where the snow lingers last in summer; or Ping Pené in the Carlitte country—where the Ark is known to have rested, rather than on Mount Ararat, as ignorant people think; or quite

possibly on their own La Rhune, to whose summit nobody dares to climb because of the witches who hold *sabbat* there. Wherever she was, she still awaited, said Damasa, the youth with a pure soul.

Once, it appeared, a young man of the valleys had found her weeping bitterly into a pool of frozen tears, and had kissed her once because he pitied her, kissed her twice because in his arms she suddenly felt like a beautiful young girl; but when he looked again, being a cautious youth, he saw that she was, after all, only a snake. And so he went away, promising to return for the third kiss. But then he was called to his military service, and so forgot; and it was quite a while before he thought any more of the Snake Princess. He set out to find her again, and did so; and in her joy at seeing him she looked so beautiful that he kissed her on the mouth for the third time, quite willingly and often. But nothing happened.

"Why not?" asked Bette blankly.

"Why not?" repeated Nacio, puzzled to recall the point.

Old Damasa winked at Emily, and grinned a toothless grin.

"*Hé, hé!*" she chuckled. "Why not, indeed? Go find the snake yourself, *mon fils*—for you, I think, she may yet turn into a princess!"

"I do not like that story, Anna-Damasa," frowned Nacio, coloring suddenly. "You should not have told it to my sisters."

"They tell in the Jura another version," put in

Emily. "They say that when the young man found the snake for the third time, he had grown wiser, and saw that it was not an enchanted princess after all, but only the wicked fairy herself, trying to make a snake out of him. And so he went away again, leaving her unkissed."

"Oh, but that is more nice," pronounced Bette. "Much more nice! . . . Isn't it, Nacio? And it served her right for allowing herself to be kissed like that by a strange young man, out of pity."

There is an especial holiday for shepherds in that land of special holidays, when the fires of Saint Jean make all the mountainsides beautiful by night; and afterward their ashes are scattered over the fields to make them fruitful—Saint Jean Baptiste being, perhaps, a lineal descendant of the deity Baïgorisc.

It was thought, naturally, that Nacio would return to pass the holiday among his own people, but he did not do so. Essetore, his shepherd boy, reported that he had celebrated Saint Jean instead at a village on the far side, nearer to the pastures; a village not very distant from their own village as the crow flies, but separated from it by a mountain peak, several bad precipices, and a thickly wooded valley, so that there was little intercourse between the two. The only road connecting them, indeed, was barely more than a mule track, impassable for vehicles, used chiefly by the *maledetta* on their night adventures into Spain, or by the shepherds with their flocks. Emily had never seen this village, fond as she was of exploring the mountains, far and near.

"It is nothing to see," shrugged Esteban. "Only a few old crazy houses, a *pelota* court that is a disgrace to the canton, and the house of Zubaïos, the painter—who calls himself Spaniard, but is the son of good Basque peasantry, more's the pity!"

Emily pricked an interested ear. "What! Zubaïos lives in this neighborhood? Why, I gathered my first impression of Basque life from his pictures—I thought all of you wore orange coats and trousers of indigo blue, and lived in houses with rainbow roofs! How does it happen we have never seen him?"

Her husband shrugged. "The society of an artist *chez lui,*" he said with the primness of a Yankee schoolma'am, "is not the society a man chooses for his young wife!"—and Emily realized with amusement that she was once more being kept unspotted from the world. She registered a mental vow, however, to make the acquaintance of Señor Zubaïos as soon as feasible; believing herself quite immune from the contagions of artistry.

So, on a cool, wind-bright morning, when the singing breeze that swept the valley seemed to call to high adventure, she surprised Nacio with his promised picnic. They went on horseback; herself with the infant Léocadie, who was of a distinctly sporting temperament, chuckling and gurgling from a sort of pillion basket in front of her saddle; Bette with small Wally manfully astride behind her; and for bodyguard their neighbor, Etcheverray, since Esteban could not be spared from his farm labors at

this season of the year. Esteban took the business of the farm far more seriously than he had ever taken the business of fortune making.

Their mountain-bred horses took the trail like goats, picking their way very surely, mounting up and up until, high against the sky line, Etcheverray pointed out a huddle of stones which he told them was Nacio's cave hut. Tethering the horses below, near the road, they made the rest of the climb on foot, among surprised and staring sheep, until the dog Olivier rushed out to welcome them with frantic demonstrations, and Essetore presently appeared, all grins. The master, he said—that was Nacio—had gone down to the village beyond to buy provisions. But yes, the master frequently went to the village nowadays to buy provisions.

"Evidently Nacio does not find solitude quite so congenial as before," murmured Emily.

Etcheverray did not answer. He was looking quizzically at a shawl which lay on Nacio's pile of skins—his Roland bed: a brightly embroidered woman's shawl, with long silk fringes. Emily herself had a startled moment; then she smiled. He had bought it undoubtedly from passing smugglers as a present for one of them at home; perhaps for herself. It was green, a color she often wore.

She looked about her with sympathetic interest at the boy's dwelling place, the mysterious rear of which was curtained off from observation by hanging blankets; neat as a man's house is often neat, the hearth carefully swept and laid ready for firing, food la-

beled nicely in little jars on a shelf, books everywhere, conveniently arranged so that one saw at once what was there. She missed, incidentally, the Idylls of the King. Was he outgrowing them already? She smiled over the birds' eggs, carefully named, the mastodonic bones, the gruesomely realistic stuffed pet lamb. When his dog Olivier died, doubtless Nacio would stuff him also; tearfully, but with a certain pride in his taxidermy.

"Bette, you and the baby people will stay with Olivier and Essetore," she said, "and prepare the picnic, while the count and I go down to the village to find Nacio." . . . Also to call on the painter Zubaïos, she confided later to Etcheverray, who assented doubtfully.

"Myself, I find him interesting; a man of no morals and many virtues. But—probably he will be from home today; he is very frequently from home. And probably, also, Esteban will call me out, with pistols, when he finds in what an adventure I am encouraging you," he added dryly. "However, I am, as always, at your service."

"Dear me," said Emily, "you act—the lot of you—as if this Zubaïos were a sort of ogre seeking whom he may devour; whereas he is probably quite a harmless old victim of the artistic reputation."

"He is, as madame suggests, at least not young; and if he happens to be something of an ogre"—Etcheverray shrugged—"madame has, no doubt, a spell to cast on ogres, as on the rest of us."

The village, visible from Nacio's aerie, was a

huddle of humble roofs of odd angles clinging about a tall open belfry; one of those mountain hamlets which are so picturesque seen from a distance, but which resolve themselves on close acquaintance into one narrow dusty street, unshaded from the glare, upon which open a few mean houses with curtains across their doors; uninhabited apparently, except by a mangy cur or two, scratching fleas in the center of traffic.

They traversed this street, looking in vain for Nacio, until they came to a more pretentious house at the far end, with a wall in front of it and a pair of fine gates of foliated iron, through which a courtyard was visible, and the plain façade of a house with a sundial upon it.

"Aha, the ogre's castle!" murmured Emily with satisfaction, pulling at a long bell handle that hung beside the gates. From far inside they could hear a faint jangling. The courtyard remained quite still, except for some pigeons strutting and cooing upon the marble well curb.

"Evidently," murmured Etcheverray in some relief, "Zubaïos is not here."

"It looks promising. Let us go in and see," said Emily serenely.

Uneasily Etcheverray followed her across the drowsy courtyard, reminding her that it was the hour of siesta.

"In Spain it would be, but this is not Spain." Emily's taste for adventure grew with practice.

She put a tentative hand on one of the brown cur-

tains drawn outside across doors and windows in the Spanish fashion, and disclosed an open tiled passageway, through which the sound of a monotonous, droning voice was faintly audible. "At least they aren't all asleep," she murmured, with a mischievous chuckle for the other's perturbation; and followed the direction of the voice.

It came from a room beyond, which she recognized on sight as a studio; a great, long room filled with color and canvases and the pleasant smell of paint, at whose far end was a dais with a model throne upon it. And seated on the model throne, as if painted there by Rossetti, or Burne-Jones, or possibly Watts, their eyes focused upon a *Moyen-Age* vision in a long green-velvet gown, roped with pearls. On either side of her breasts hung down a thick long rope of hair. "'Yellow as ripe corn,'" thought Emily inevitably. The lovely little head on its long full throat, the pose, the passionate lips, the rather empty wide gray eyes, took her at once back to the Tate Gallery; or was it the Wallace Collection? Something very British and naïve and familiar. And at the feet of this *Moyen-Age* vision, very suitably, lay a youth flat on his stomach, reading out of a fat green book.

It was the *Moyen-Age* vision who saw them first, with a startled sidelong sweep of long lashes. The boy turned his gaze to follow hers, and leaped to his feet with a cry of pleasure.

"What! Is it possible? You of all people! How I have wished for you to know each other! . . .

Dorotea, it is Emilie—Emilie of whom you have heard me always talking—with our friend Etcheverray, from L'Ey Kahatcia. They two, of all the world!"

"Charmed, I'm sure," murmured a voice of liquid music, genteelly, in the accents of Maida Vale. "If this isn't a real treat! You're the American girl, aren't you, who married one of the natives here? Not that I blame you! They're a lot more gentlemanly in their actions than the French, if you ask me. I've been wanting to know you ever since Nasho told me about you," she added kindly.

"Thank you. Nacio should have brought you to us," murmured Emily, her mind going around in circles. Who—what—how was this?

"I wished to do so; I wished it very much," said the boy earnestly. "I begged Dorotea to go with me to the feast of Saint Jean in our village. But she would not leave; she was afraid her father would return in her absence and miss her. He is old, you see, and depends upon Dorotea."

Her father? The painter had married an Englishwoman, perhaps? Emily wondered.

"I did not know," Etcheverray was murmuring courteously, "that my friend Zubaïos had recently acquired so charming a daughter."

"Adopted," she corrected, again with that little sidelong flutter of lashes, "and not so recently at that. My father and mother and Mr. Zubaïos were great friends, and so when they died, he took me on, you see, while I was still a kiddie."

"I see," said Emily, beginning to collect her wits. "And I think you are not quite a stranger to me after all. I have seen you in Señor Zubaïos' paintings, have I not?"

"Oh yes, I generally pose for him," said the girl indifferently. "That is, when he uses a blonde. Pity he isn't here to see you, Mrs. Urruty; you'd be a real treat to him," she added. "Light flesh tints are so hard to find on the Continent!"

"Are they?" murmured Emily. "I am sorry to take my brother away, but we must be going back to my children. Perhaps Señor Zubaïos will bring you to us one day?" she added politely, hardly knowing what else to say; and elicited a flash of resentment.

"That man? Why, he wouldn't take a person anywhere if she asked him on bended knee! What does he think a girl's made of—stuck off here in this nasty hole, miles from a cinema or a shop, nothing to do but eat, and afraid to do too much of that because she might lose her lines? Honestly, Nasho's been a godsend to me—haven't you, dearie?"

"Have I?" he breathed, very blissful and quiet.

He tore himself away from her with manifest reluctance, running back more than once to beg her to come with them. "But it is a pic-a-nic, the way you eat in England!" they heard him urging eagerly. "My sister Bette is with them, my brother's babies—you will like those! And my grandmother—I know her—will have sent more food than we could finish

in a week. They are my people! You will not come with us?"

The *Moyen-Age* vision, however, had the tact to decline.

"What do you think of her?" he burst out joyously as soon as they were beyond earshot—the age-old question asked doubtless by Cain, in love, of his mother Eve. Emily saw that she had already surrendered to another her position of Elaine-Guinevere-Shalott. Fortunately he could not wait for their answer; he had so much to say himself.

"What it was to find her here, of all places! Blond as you, *belle-sœur*, with hair even more a fleece of gold, and the same clear, beautiful English speech." Emily winced; she was guilty perhaps of the faults of her native States, but not of Maida Vale. "Hidden away in this rough old place like—"

"Like an enchanted princess?" finished Emily, with a sudden anxious memory of the Snake Fairy.

"Yes! How you always understand!" breathed Nacio, kissing her hand in gratitude. "Now you know why I did not return to spend the shepherd's day with you—I was with her! Just we two alone together, till the moon rose and set again. Ah! She loves our legends, Emilie; she lets me play to her by the hour on the *chirilion*. Sometimes up here in the starlight"—they were nearing his hut—"it is like heaven: we two alone together above the world."

"She comes to you here?" asked Etcheverray quietly. The mystery of the shawl explained itself.

"She does me that honor," said the boy, with a

special little dignity, as if half aware that the occasion required it. "She finds it lonely there in the village, with her father absent; no one to speak with, no one to understand her language. She adores poetry, Emilie, like you and me; she lets me read to her for hours out of our book—you know?" he reminded her boyishly. "And that is kind of her, for, as you remember, I do not read the English very well. But she is always kind. And, of course, we do not always make music or read together."

"No?" encouraged Emily faintly.

"Ah, no, indeed! Sometimes we talk. Sometimes we do not even talk. We simply sit together, gazing down on the sleeping valleys which do not know our happiness, pitying them, dreaming together—"

"Hand in hand, perhaps?" encouraged Emily further, with the guilty feeling of those who peep through keyholes.

"Ah, never! Do not tease me, *belle-sœur!*"—he blushed. "I would not dare to take her hand. You see, I love her," he said, with a gentleness which brought a lump into her throat, a sharp exquisite memory of his brother's gentle wooing.

She and Etcheverray exchanged a helpless glance.

"Good heavens, Des Luynes!" she said later. "Do they learn nothing, there at Toulouse, except Sanskrit and Greek and idiotic things like that? Nothing of life?"

He shrugged; his habitual gesture. "Unfortunately there is no longer a College de Gai Savoir at

Toulouse, as formerly, in the days of Clemence Isaure. How can the priests teach what they do not know?"

She groaned. "What shall we do about this?"

"Do? But nothing, *chère madame.* Whatever we could do would be—too much," warned the other, who knew whereof he spoke. He added after a moment, significantly, "Zubaïos will soon return."

Not long afterward, Bette came to Emily with trouble in her face—Bette the responsible, to whom all people, even her grandmother, turned in times of need. She had a question to ask: Among married people was it obligatory to tell everything, or was a wife permitted to keep to herself a secret not her own? Emily, on the horns of a dilemma, aware that her reply might serve as precedent on occasions yet to come, made the impromptu decision that a wife might use her judgment; with happily married people, she told the anxious little girl, there was so deep an understanding that confidences need not always be spoken, particularly if they concerned the affairs of other people. Bette, manifestly relieved, unburdened herself.

Nacio—her adored Nacio—was in some difficulty; he had sent Essetore, his shepherd boy, to her under cover of darkness on a secret errand. She was to give Essetore, for Nacio, a purse well filled with money, a cloak large enough to cover a woman's dress, and a pistol with cartridges; and she was to say no word of this to anybody, especially not to Esteban, nor his father, nor *la madre.*

"But if I am to send a purse full of money I must get it from somebody," explained Bette. "And he said nothing about keeping the secret from you, *belle-sœur,* who understand everything. I trouble myself about the pistol. What need has Nacio, alone on the mountains with sheep, of a pistol?"

What indeed? Emily, now thoroughly alarmed, did her best to reassure the little sister. She was going to ride with Monsieur Etcheverray that evening, she said, to see the moon rise over the edge of La Rhune, and would herself carry to Nacio the things he required.—It was another impromptu decision; just how she would explain to Esteban this unprecedented moonlight excursion alone with another man, she did not know. Here was perhaps a test of the married confidence of which she had just boasted.

But the test held. Esteban made no comment; explaining carelessly to the family after she had left with Etcheverray that he wished to encourage this growing friendship with their poor Tubal, who needed more of the company of women.

"And to that end you offer him your wife?" commented his stepmother in astonishment. "But what a trusting nature, my Esteban!"

"It is a nature which knows when to trust," commented her husband staunchly; the Urruty men invariably stood back to back in an emergency.

They were still standing back to back, silent and anxious and rather grim, when the pounding of hoofs on turf announced the return of the moon riders,

well after midnight; and Esteban, stepping out silently to lift his wife from the saddle, lifted down, instead, a perfectly strange young woman, with blond braids of hair falling over a dress of bedraggled velvet, who burst into tears on his shoulder and besought him to save somebody—Esteban was too astonished to ask whom.

Etcheverray spoke from the dark, urgently: "Your wife awaits you, with Nacio, in the high pastures, Esteban. She asks that this young woman be given into the hands of the ladies, while you and Pedro return at once with me. To see," he added in a lower tone, "whether it is true that Nacio has killed Zubaïos."

It was a curious picture Emily and the count had found some hours earlier, when they reached the shepherd's hut: Nacio seated on a rock in the moonlight, like Pan himself, playing to his drowsy flocks; the music of the *chirilion* coming down to them as they climbed—thin airy music, cool and faint, which Emily remembered to have thought when first she heard it the very voice of the Pyrenees. About the serried ranks of the sheep, bristling, important, evidently on sentry duty, marched Olivier, the dog, too much occupied to give them more than a brief wag and a bay of greeting; at which Nacio leaped down from his rock and ran to them, finger on lip.

"Speak softly. *She* is in there, asleep!"

"Not that girl?" Emily's worst fears were realized.

"Yes, it is Dorotea! She has come to me, my friends—come to me forever. She trusts me, although she has little reason to trust men. She lies there on my bed and sleeps, while I watch. Is it not charming of her? But now we must go away, for I have killed a man."

"Oh, Nacio! It's not possible!" But Emily saw that it was possible, even probable. Nacio's whole look had changed. The face was quite calm, even exalted, but it was no longer the face of a serious seraph. Nacio had grown overnight to his inches.

"Do not be frightened, *belle-sœur*," he said gently. "That one needed killing. Here in the valleys we do not tolerate such men as Zubaïos. Things were not as I thought. He has never been as an indulgent parent to my Dorotea, a kind old friend. *Au contraire!* He returned unexpectedly while I was at his house, and very quietly, as if hoping to surprise us—why he should wish to do that, I do not know. But suddenly there was a commotion, a great outcry, and he had laid his hands on Dorotea. I think he meant to beat her, because I was there. The words he said—but I will not soil your ears by repeating them! Only one thing I must explain." He looked at them so piteously that Emily wanted to hide his hurt eyes on her breast. "As I told you, he has not been as a father to Dorotea. He has the ambition, old and hideous as he is, to become her lover. Yes, it is like that!" He made a gesture of tragedy. "Could there be a more terrible situation for a woman?"

"But—why did she not leave him at once?"

"How could she? Without money, without friends. There is nobody to help her but myself. She has told me so!"

Emily groaned. "My dear—what did you do?"

"As I have said, I killed him. It was quite easy." He looked at his hands as if surprised to find what effective weapons he carried about with him. "I lost my temper when he touched her, I took him by the throat—I am very strong—and choked and choked him until he fell, with blood at the mouth. Then I brought Dorotea away with me to a safer place. That is all."

"This happened during the morning?" It was the first time Etcheverray had spoken.

"At noon, during the hour of siesta," Nacio replied.

Etcheverray gave a great sigh of relief. "In that case they would have found his body long before this, *mon fils*, and come to take you."

The boy gave a shrug of indifference. "Probably. It is possible I have not killed him, then. No matter. I should not have run from them. I have done nothing to regret—only it was necessary first to take Dorotea away to a safer place. If he lives, she shall at least never go back to him. He is unfit!"

Emily felt her way delicately. "But, dear boy, even if he has not been quite a father to her, as you say, he has been for some time her guardian, her protector, has he not?"

"And what a protector!"

"Even so! After all, she is not a child; she is older than yourself. Nacio, dear, a woman like that was old before you were born!"

She was almost relieved to see that he did not understand her, however. "She is only twenty," he protested. "Three years older—what is that? To marry a woman older than oneself is very settling. I have heard *la madre* say so."

"Almost too settling," murmured Emily, aghast. "Has it ever occurred to you that Señor Zubaïos might have certain rights?"

"Rights! What rights?"

"Men of the world might consider—" But she could not finish that. "Perhaps Señor Zubaïos felt he had cause to be jealous of you," was her lame conclusion.

"He should have controlled his jealousy, then," said the boy calmly. "After all I am the younger, the handsomer; why should she not love me? You speak of rights, *belle-sœur*. Such rights as he might have had, to gratitude, to kindness, to respect for his years, he has forfeited by his conduct. You see, you do not know all! She has told me much that I cannot speak of to you, Emilie, but—you remember seeing certain pictures for which she served as model? *Alors*, there are other pictures you cannot have seen, being a woman. Dorotea was forced to be the model also for those! Must I speak more plainly? She has, it appears, a beautiful body"—he spoke with touching reverence—"a body even more beautiful

than her face. That man, if you can credit it, that friend of her parents, that brute whom you call her guardian and protector—he has forced her to expose her body to the gaze of all the world. He has forced her, the demon, to pose for his pictures in—in the altogether!"

Emily's gaze besought help from the Comte des Luynes, and found none. She made a final effort. "You are sure he *forced* her to do this?" she asked faintly. "My dear little brother, don't you realize that art knows no convention? Some of the greatest art existing owes itself to the—the public spirit of nude models. Why, the sister of an emperor—of Napoleon himself—did not disdain to lend her beautiful body to the cause of art!"

Nacio looked at her. "I am not an emperor," he said. "If a man so much as suggested painting the nude body of one of my sisters, I should kill him, as I have killed Zubaïos, with my two hands! Ah, no, *belle-sœur;* if I have come too late to protect her innocent childhood, I can at least protect the womanhood of my Dorotea!"

Emily was silenced, damning in her heart the complete poetic works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

The girl herself appeared in the door of the hut at that moment, a lovely disheveled vision, still in the *Moyen-Age* robe, with a great mass of hair falling about her like a cloak of copper gold.

"Oh, ain't it awful?" she cried in her musical, plaintive cockney. "Would you ever have guessed Nasho could act so fierce? What are you going to

do? You wouldn't separate us now, after all we've been through together? Why, Nasho's all I've got, since Zubaïos turned against me." Large, lovely tears began to roll out of her large and lovely eyes. "My word, you'd ought to have seen 'em! At each other's throats all in a minute, they were, like a pair of bulldogs lookin' for a grip. Oh, Gawd, maybe I wasn't scared! I'm still scared, for that matter," she sobbed; "and Nasho isn't much of a comfort to me, I must say, making me lie down in here all by myself while he sits outside on that rock, tootling on his nasty little flute!"

The girl was evidently completely overwrought; and Nacio, with a beautiful gesture of protecting manhood, went to her and took her in his arms.

Apparently he no longer feared to touch his lady's hand. She has ceased to be the Lily Maid; but she could still qualify, perhaps, for Guinevere.

It was Etcheverray who suggested taking the girl to the Urruty hacienda, and returning with Esteban and Pedro to see how matters stood with Zubaïos. The boy, exhausted after his late emotions, acceded with touching gratitude to any suggestion, provided his Dorotea was not returned to the painter's house. He even consented to lie down on his pile of skins and sleep, while Emily took his place on guard over the flock; a strange experience to add to her collection, that long night alone in the hush of high moonlit desolation, listening momently for the arrival of the outraged painter, or of the *garde civile* to arrest the boy for his death. She was somewhat

reassured and soothed by the browsing, tinkling sounds made by the sheep, by the alert and sleepless company of the dog Olivier, who did not know what might be amiss, but was, as always, prepared to grapple with it on sight. At dawn Esteban came to her, running, pale with concern; and never was wife more gladly aware of the broad capacity of her husband's shoulders.

There followed, of course, the anticlimax; in life, as in Nature, the atmosphere of great altitudes is too rarefied for ordinary lungs. Etcheverray and Pedro Urruty returned from their investigations on the far side of the mountain, looking rather sheepish. No, Zubaïos was by no means dead; they had seen him.

"Hah!" muttered Esteban. "What did the fellow do?"

"He laughed," was the surprising reply. "Although his throat is bound up in bandages as for a diphtheria. 'So,' he said, 'my good Christian neighbors, you have taken the little Dotty under your protection? But that is *épatant!* Keep her, my friends—keep her by all means, as long as you like. It saves me money! But when you weary of playing the good Samaritan, you may return the girl to me, if you please; for by that time I shall have reached the point in my modernist Crucifixion where I shall need her hair for the Magdalene.'"

Esteban stared without comment.

"He sent a further message by me, to you Urruty," added Etcheverray. "He said, 'Tell them to keep their pretty Nacio at home now; for if ever

again I find a strange young *dindon* strutting it in my hen yard, I shall certainly have somebody wring its neck; being much too fat and lazy myself to risk any further encounters with an impassioned turkey cock!' "

The older Urruty held a family consultation, with Etcheverray present in an advisory capacity.

"We seem to have the young woman on our hands," said Pedro. "What are we going to do with Nacio?"

"Keep him busy," counseled the matriarch; her one panacea for all ills.

"Get her off your hands as soon as is possible," advised Etcheverray. "Propinquity at this stage may prove dangerous indeed."

That, said Emily, was easier said than done; they could not very well expose her on the hillside for ravens to pluck at, after the Spartan fashion of dealing with unwanted female children.

"We will give her money to go away," was Esteban's simple masculine solution.

"Impossible!" reminded his father. "She is an invited guest of our house!" The rights of guests were sacred.

"And even if you sent her away like that," added Emily, "Nacio would go charging straight after her, lance in rest. Don't you realize that he is busy being the complete thing in knights-errant?"

"I realize that he is busy being an even greater

fool than he was born," muttered his grandmother. "What does the *doguin* expect? To marry her?"

Exactly that, sighed his father; reminding them that Nacio would cease to be a boy on his eighteenth birthday, when he came into his own inheritance.

"As to that, I myself shall have something to say! He brings no wife to this house without my consent so long as I am *etchekandere* here," said the matriarch sternly.

But Emily, who was in his confidence, explained that Nacio had no intention of bringing his wife to live in the *etcheonda;* he intended to take his inheritance and go away with her out into the wide, wide world to make a fortune like Esteban's—presumably by writing poetry.

"*Tiens*, that is serious; that I cannot forbid!" muttered the matriarch. "A man is a man, even in the basket."

Emily was reminded of the story which originated this familiar saying: An Amazonion Basque woman, having married a small and ineffectual husband, found him superfluous, and decided to get rid of him. So she popped him unawares, one day, into the hamper in which she carried clothes to the washing stones, and started off to the river to drown him.

But on the way a vicious dog attacked her, and as she was afraid of dogs, she asked her husband to lift up his manly voice and scare the brute away. The husband consented, on condition that he be let out of the basket; and remained the head of his household ever after.

"No, I cannot forbid a man to marry where he chooses," mused the matriarch. "However, he has a mother; and if a woman may not choose her own children, she may at least choose her children-in-law. . . . Eh, Fancine? You will not permit this young imbecile to ruin himself by trying to make a *cabotine* respectable?" For Madame Urruty from the first had cherished no romantic illusions about their guest.

"Me? What can I do?" moaned Pedro's wife, wringing her plump hands. "Nobody listens to me in this house, least of all my own children!"

"You can at least take some of your children and go away, while this Dorotea is with us," remarked the matriarch in disgust. "She is no suitable influence for *jeunnes filles bien élevées*."

Fancine meekly did as she was bid, taking well-elevated Bette and the smaller girls to her parents for a visit, while Nacio's Dorotea was left somewhat in command of the situation.

The girl made the most of it. Despite the wide gray blankness of her gaze, she had apparently a few thoughts of her own—those thoughts of youth which are frequently such long, long thoughts. She had taken in at a glance the comfort, even the luxury, of the Urruty surroundings.

"My word, they do themselves well for natives, don't they?" she commented privately to Emily, whom she apparently regarded, to the latter's dismay, as a kindred spirit; and her manner with Nacio became less carelessly proprietory and more defer-

ential, as to the strong, all-conquering male. It was evident that if Nacio intended to marry her on the arrival of his eighteenth birthday, she intended quite as fully to marry Nacio.

Emily felt more and more helpless to deal with the affair, although she realized that in this emergency the Urruty were for once relying upon her, rather than themselves.

"Leave this to my wife," she had heard Esteban advise his grandmother confidently. "In these things she is very wise."

But the girl Dorothy—who preferred, she said graciously, to be called Dotty by her friends—became more lovely daily, even in her own commonplace clothing, which Zubaïos had shown the irony to send to her to replace his model costume. She had settled into the situation with the ease of a pretty stray cat, and spent her time sleeping and smoothing her fur. She had adopted with alacrity the Spanish custom of the siesta, which with her began early in the day and lasted late, much to Emily's relief, since she dreaded the entertainment of their guest.

But the bathtub was apparently sufficient entertainment; the girl took a rather pathetic pleasure in its plenitude of hot water and fragrant bath salts and scented soaps and unguents.

"This is the first time I've been really clean since I struck the Continent!" she remarked with a candid satisfaction, ignoring Emily's faint suggestion that with determination it was possible to acquire

cleanliness even when lacking a porcelain tub and running water.

Only toward evening did Dorothy emerge in full blossom, as it were, ready for Nacio; her copper-gold hair gleaming from the brush, her skin the color of rich milk, with beneath it that inimitable, beautiful play of color which is the heritage of healthy English youth.

The boy had returned to his sheep without protest, even gladly, reassured as to his lady's safety. To dream of the beloved is, at a certain age, even more delightful than to be with her; and the sky pastures offered certain facilities for dreaming. But at evening he left his flocks to the care of Essetore and the faithful Olivier, and returned by a short cut to the hacienda. The short cut was a matter of many miles, over a mountain, down a sharp precipice, skirting several waterfalls, crossing a wooded bottom land, and up again; several hours of climbing, dangerous enough after dark. But this Nacio counted as nothing in return for one brief hour of bliss with his Dorotea.

The bliss seemed to consist chiefly in sitting together on the doorstone in the sweet July darkness, his voice a low and steady murmur, punctuated by her soft, empty giggle; with occasional intervals of silence, interrupted periodically by various members of the household assigned to sentry duty; for the matriarch was, when she chose, a ruthless chaperon.

"What in the world," asked Emily of the boy once, "do you find to talk so much about?"—having

herself found conversation with their guest well-nigh impossible.

The boy replied blissfully, "When you love, *belle-sœur*, to talk is not necessary." And Emily felt a stab of sympathy. It was true that she and Esteban had wasted very little of their courtship in conversation.

Yet none of those on sentry duty had ever reported to the matriarch any conduct which she would have regarded as unseemly.

"Good heavens," demanded Emily of her husband, "does he never kiss her? Do you suppose the boy makes that long, exhausting climb every evening merely to look at her?" . . . and was reminded by Esteban that he himself had needed to be taught the possibility of kissing between the affianced.

"You were certainly an apt pupil," she commented. "But poor Dotty must be having the surprises of her life!" And, indeed, the girl's habitual blankness of expression began to take on a rather puzzled look.

Once Emily overheard Nacio's rapt voice murmuring from memory Victor Hugo's immortal verses about the earth-worm who loved a star:

"Madame, à vos pieds
Dans l'ombre une cœur est là. . . .
Qui se meurt en bas
Quand vous brillez en haut—"

Into the tranced silence which followed fell her soft little giggle: "My word, Nasho, you do know a

lot of poetry! I suppose they teach it at your school."

Emily tried at intervals to open his eyes, and ears; an ungrateful task. How disillusion him, if Dorothy could not do her own disillusioning? True, the soft voice—another charming English heritage—might conceal the vulgarity of her speech from so unaccustomed an ear as Nacio's; and various odd solecisms, at table and otherwise, he put down doubtless to racial differences of custom. But the cheapness of the girl was as obvious as pinchbeck jewelry.

"Certainly she is beautiful, very beautiful," admitted Emily, "but she will not be so always, dear boy."

"You mean she will grow old? Naturally; who does not? We shall grow old together, she and I."

"I don't mean that at all! Beauty has nothing, really, to do with age. Look at your grandmother, for example. She is still a beautiful person, in her way. It is a matter of finish, of impression; perhaps of the bony structure—"

"But artists value my Dorotea particularly for her bony structure!" protested Nacio eagerly. "She has told me so!" The girl was rather given to discussing the points of her physique, much as a singer likes to discuss the points of his voice.

Emily made a gesture of impatience. "Listen, Nacio! When you have gone to the horse market at Tarbes with your father or *la madre*, have you not sometimes seen for sale quite cheap a pretty little filly, much prettier than the thoroughbreds—long

mane and tail, nice little round haunches, glossy skin, and so forth? Yet when you looked close, you saw why she was cheap. Too heavy in the barrel, perhaps, or a certain thickness about the region of fetlocks—"

The boy burst out laughing. "Ah, *belle-sœur*, are you trying to tell me that Dorotea has a thickness in the region of the fetlocks? Why, her ankles are slim as—"

"Don't be an idiot, Nacio! You know quite well what I mean," said Emily crossly. "I am trying to tell you that Dorothy—well, that Dorothy is not and never will be quite a lady." She paused abruptly, remembering that it was Esteban who had once asked her what was a lady.

But the boy nodded. "She is not *femme de monde*, like you—I know that! But what should I do with a wife who was *femme de monde*, there in the wilds of America—at Esteban's mines, perhaps, or with Hercule Olhaiby, the wine grower? Ah, no, you mean more than that, dear Emilie!" His grave smile reminded her that he was ceasing very rapidly to be a boy. "You wish to tell me that she is not your equal in other ways? Perhaps you are right. I know very little about women. But I am not her judge; I am her lover!"

The simplicity of it silenced Emily, shamed her a little.

Nacio went on quietly, "I think you wish to tell me, perhaps, that she is not quite a good woman. But there you are wrong," he said very earnestly.

"I know that you are wrong. Men often do things for which they have shame afterward—you see, I have heard them talk. Even such men as my father, as Esteban. But that does not keep them from being good men, nor from being regarded as good men, so long as they are ashamed afterward, and never do such things again. Why should one be less forgiving to women than to men? King Arthur was not so; nor our Blessed Lord Jesus."

Emily, somewhat nonplused by this unexpected appearance of the double-standard question, did her best to give candor for candor: "I think it is a question of modesty, dear Nacio. Modesty is still demanded of women, just as courage will always be demanded of men. And with reason; it is for the preservation of the race."

"Modesty? But of course! A woman who has lost her modesty is—*tiens*, she has ceased to be a woman!" he said sternly. "But my Dorotea is very modest. Shall I tell you how I know? Because once, when I made a compliment upon her beauty, saying how her bosom was exquisite, showing so beneath the thinness of her dress, she blushed like a sunset and told me I was a very naughty boy, that people did not make such compliments in English. Was not that modesty?" he asked in touching triumph.

Emily gave it up. She could not tell him that a blush might be as often the sign of prurience as of modesty; that at best it was a mere matter of sensitive vascular muscles and a clear skin.

The conversation touched and saddened her, but it left her with an idea. She went to their neighbor with it, as she often went with ideas.

Etcheverray listened soberly. "It is a risk," he said at last. "He believes in her—in her possibilities. *Eh bien;* if you destroy illusion, what do you put in its place?" She realized that the question came from one who had never found anything to put in its place.

She sighed. "I don't know. But he must take his chances like other men, Des Luynes. He cannot spend his life in the sky pastures."

"Unfortunately, no!" The man sighed also. "Very well. I shall speak to Jaun-Smeet about it."

This American son of Pilar de Maytie, still called "Jaun-Smeet" in the village, although he was rapidly bringing new fame to his mother's name elsewhere, had returned to the valleys that summer to paint his yearly picture for the salon. Much of his success he credited to the influence of his mother's friend, the Comte des Luynes; so that he accepted any suggestion from that source with alacrity.

"In fact, I was just casting about for a new model," he said, "and if Zubaïos uses her, as you say, she ought to be good enough for me."

Emily was able to tell their guest shortly that a young painter had come to the village who had heard of her beauty and wished to paint her, although he was rather shy about asking her for sittings.

"I'll bet he's heard about me," said Dorothy complacently. "There isn't a model on the Rive Gauche

who can hold a pose longer; to say nothing of the flesh tints. . . . Why should he be shy? Zubaïos doesn't own me, you know!" she bridled. "It would serve him right to have me sit for a new man!"

Whether she resented the more the Spaniard's attack upon her, or his subsequent indifference to her, Emily could not determine; but the vacant gray eyes lighted with new interest. Perhaps time was beginning to hang a little heavy on her hands while she waited for her lover to arrive at a marriageable age; despite the pleasures of the bathtub.

Nacio was well content with the arrangement; it flattered him that another painter had recognized the beauty of his beloved, and Jaun-Smeet was their friend, their neighbor; a very different person from Zubaïos.

"By all means let him paint a picture of you," he said. "When I have money enough, I shall buy it."

"You do not think there is any danger for John himself out of this?" asked Emily of Etcheverray, with some compunction.

He smiled a little sadly. "For John? I wish there were! Ah, no, you yourself spoke a terrible truth when you said of him that he was not a man but an artist. He will be one day a very great artist, I am afraid; and a very lonely one. His mother," he added quietly, "had a way of leaving people lonely."

The picture progressed quite rapidly, thanks to Dorothy's gifts as a model. John never tired of singing her praises. "Why, the girl's perfection!

Not a blemish; not a line in her face, not an idea in her head to interfere with one's own conception of her. She has a talent for inertia that amounts to genius! All you need do is to arrange her in a certain pose, and there she stays indefinitely."

In gratitude to Etcheverray for suggesting her, he allowed his friend to bring young Nacio—at home for some feast day—to see the picture before it was done, although he was not fond of premature private views. Success had given Pilar's son a certain quiet confidence which amounted to indifference; he cared nothing for approval or disapproval; all he asked was to be allowed to work; and his work showed it.

He received them in the room that had been his mother's; now a bare and businesslike studio, shorn of its rose brocades and its Aubusson, about which clung, nevertheless, a faint suggestion of remembered fragrance. John always liked to work in that room.

He pointed out a canvas standing by the north window. "There you are! I call it 'Marriage of Luzaïde and Maïttagorri,' the fabled nuptials of earth and sun which is supposed to have peopled the Pyrenees."

It was a rather curious picture: vague nebulæ of drifting, lifting dawn mists, brightening as they rose, to culminate in a single nude woman's figure, standing with closed eyes and outspread arms of ecstasy, the bright hair floating around her like blown sunlight. One single ray from below an unseen horizon rested upon her, illuminating the exquisite body with

a pale and glowing radiance as of some sacred chalice, some holy grail brimming over with mystic light.

"Good, isn't it?" remarked the painter impersonally. "A better nude than Ingres', I think. Of course, there are details still to finish. But I've been working it in as rapidly as possible while I have this model. Pretty lucky, wasn't I? Zubaïos' famous blonde, you know—"

He paused, aware suddenly of their silence. Neither of his guests was looking at the picture. The boy's face, over which wave after wave of sickening color flowed and ebbed, was buried in his hands; the older man stood with head averted, waiting. Without a word the two turned and left the room together, leaving John staring.

The boy asked one question, hoarsely, "She consented to this of her own free will?"

Etcheverray inclined his head. "She even offered, *mon fils*. It is a famous torso. People enjoy to do the things they do best."

Emily and the two Urruty men were waiting together in the *salha* when they returned, all wearing the guilty look of conspirators. Their eyes questioned Etcheverray, who nodded imperceptibly.

It was Esteban who spoke, with an air of unconvincing jauntiness: "*A la bonne heure,* brother my lad. I am just off to Saint-Jean to put my boat, the *Gathid,* into commission. Some friends are at Biarritz—gentlemen who have shown me courtesies in America—and I have invited them to make a little

cruise along the coast. Will you help me? Or shall I take a mate out of Ciboure?"

Nacio looked around him nervously. Dorothy was not visible; she had not finished her siesta. "You go soon?"

"At once. As soon as Anatole makes ready the car."

"There will be no women?" To Emily's distress, that sick glance rested upon her in passing with a quite impersonal hostility.

"Not a woman!" Esteban smiled ruefully at his wife, who returned the smile, sighing. It was their first separation; but she knew that there are times when men must be alone. "We go to Norway," he said—"you have not see the fjords, I think?—possibly on through the Baltic Sea to Russia."

"It does not matter where we go. I will come," muttered Nacio; but the gray, drawn misery of his look had lightened perceptibly.

In the end, it proved surprisingly to be Dorothy who engaged Emily's sympathies, rather more than Nacio. The girl was a good loser. For several days she awaited the return of her lover with the puzzled expression deepening in her large, lambent gaze; but asked no questions. Women of her sort learn young the futility of asking questions.

At last Emily thought it best to break to her the news that Nacio was not returning. The eyes widened.

"Well, of all things! Why ever not?"

Emily murmured something vague about the fickleness of man.

"They're all of that," said the other simply. "But not Nasho. He's different, somehow. I'd never have thought he'd be the sort to let a girl down like this."

She accepted without unnecessary demur certain moneys intended to soothe her injured affections, and murmured that she'd be going on, then.

"Going on where?" asked Emily, although she had not intended to ask. "Not back to Zubaïos?"

"Why ever not? Where else would I go?"

Emily murmured something tentative about speaking to the English consul, using certain influences, finding some congenial work for her in a shop, perhaps. Something of the sort—

Dorothy smiled a wide, unhappy smile, and advised her reassuringly to stow it. Work in a shop? Oh, no, things had not reached quite such a pass as that! "Zubaïos will be glad enough to have me back at any time; he told that gentleman so, your Mr. Etcheverray. You see, Zubaïos needs my hair for his Magdalene."

Emily gave up the uncongenial rôle of reformer. "To say nothing of the flesh tints?" she murmured.

The other nodded, complacently enough; perhaps she consoled herself further with thoughts of her bony structure. And when she saw the automobile in which her hostess was returning her to Zubaïos' village, by the long way round, she gave a wriggle of satisfaction. "The longer the better," she mur-

mured. "My word, won't the old boy be bucked to see me returning in such style!"

At the moment of parting, however, the puzzled look returned to her. "I say, whatever put him off me?" she asked, quite suddenly. "Nasho, I mean. Do you know? Because *I* don't, though I've thought and thought. Why, I've been acting, ever since I've been here, as if I was in church! I'm not such a bad sort, either; don't drink, don't play the giddy goat like some, don't make a hog of myself about the money. If Nasho'd married me, I'd have gone straight as anybody"—only she called it "strite."

"I'm sure you would," murmured Emily, guiltily.

"It wasn't as if he didn't know about me, neither," went on the aggrieved and musical voice. "I never lied to Nasho, excepting just at first. Nobody wouldn't of expected a girl to tell him everything about herself first off! Now would they?"

"No, indeed," said the other. "Nobody would have expected that."

"Well, then, what's it all about, anyhow?"

Emily, thus appealed to, tried, in halting explanation, the theory of Peer Gynt: that man's nature is like an onion, from which layer after layer may be peeled before reaching its true core.

"Must be pretty small by that time," commented Dorothy, with her soft, high giggle. "And if Nasho's heart is anything like an onion, not taking any, thanks! Never could abide onions myself. . . . Well, I'll be going on. Home, James!" she re-

marked elegantly to the chauffeur Anatole. "Cheerio, Mrs. Urruty!"

"Cheerio, Dotty, my dear," said Emily, with some heartiness.

As she reëntered the house she noted a vaguely familiar something floating in the water butt; a green, pulpy, dissolving mass, which certainly did not belong there. She fished it out with the aid of a stick. It was her girlhood's copy of the Idylls of the King.

INTERLUDE

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTERLUDE: for basauflûte, to be played in a November garden

THERE was a chapter in the loves of Emily and Esteban which the girl, with the wise hoarding instinct of females, had put away unread, as it were, in the treasure box of her subconscious memory; as women will put away a first wedding ring (they are more careless with the second one); or a photograph taken at eighteen; or a baby's tooth. Some day, they promise themselves, some rainy, desperate sort of day, when everything goes wrong, and the wind howls in the chimney, and nobody is at hand to quarrel with, we will take these out and gloat over them, and be ourselves again. For every human being knows in his soul that only at life's great moments do we approximate ourselves.

It came to Emily just after the end of Nacio's little tragi-comedy; the sudden need to remember that even in eager, piteous youth there are idyls which remain idyls, times when everything comes right, almost despite ourselves.

No wind howled in the chimney that night, no rain fell; the moon made an aureole about the hills as if it were still her *lune de miel.* Withindoors Emily, alone for the first time in the house of her husband's people—for the Urruty retired early—

kept alive the fire on the hearth for company, eerily aware of shadows that danced, with the flickering of the flames, over portraits of persons strange to her, long since dead; over faded, ghostly banners out of wars which had passed long since into history.

What are these people to me, or I to them? she thought quite suddenly; feeling herself to be one only with the flickering shadows which danced through the old strange house into outer darkness, leaving no trace.

She went to the open door, across whose threshold slept Nagarro, actively as an old dog sleeps, with spasmodic feet making the gesture of running, and little whispered yelps as he chased through fields Elysian the rabbits of yesterday. Nothing is more lonely than moonlight to the young who have nobody to share it with. Emily recalled with a shudder her first sight of the yacht *Gathid*, sailing off as it was sailing now into just such a mist of moonlight, without her. And then, far away down the valley, she heard the faint, windy note of a *basauflûte*. The curtain of reality rolled up, upon magic.

They had returned, she and her spinster friend, after much fruitless wandering to the little house in Saint-Jean-de-Luz known to Emily affectionately as *chez Dibbs*. Doubtless it bore some more pretentious name on its note paper; Aux Acacias, or Villa of the Four Winds, or possibly Lavendar Lane, any one of which would have been appropriate enough. But

EMILY KEPT ALIVE THE FIRE ON THE HEARTH FOR COMPANY

for practical purposes it was known to its vicinity as *chez Dibbs.*

The little garden of it—one of those corners of a foreign soil which are forever England, with box, and wallflowers, and as many other British things as the climate permitted to blend with the exotic note of yucca and bamboo and magnolia—stepped down by terraced stages to a bit of beach, which at high tide the Bay of Biscay overspread to lap, not always too gently, at the foot of the stout stuccoed wall. A blue-toned wall it was, from much spraying of its vines with turquoise copperas; and topped by a small shrine containing an image of Our Lady of the Waters; for while Miss Dibbs worshiped naturally in the Anglican communion, she had her artist's sympathy for certain picturesque details of the Roman creed.

"I always feel," she explained to her young companion, "that the more things one is able to believe in, and the more people, the more one is likely somehow to get somewhere with it all in the end; if you know what I mean?"

Emily did not; but she was always quite willing to take her friend's vague and kindly sentiments on faith.

The spinster was at her wit's end how to console a young widow who was so awkwardly not quite a widow; one who could not even permit herself the sorry comfort of wearing crêpe for a husband she had not got. Religion, she felt, was indicated; yet one hesitated to intrude on another's privacy in such mat-

ters. What to do to assuage a grief it seemed slightly improper to discuss?

Poor, dear young Mr. Wallace, she sighed inwardly; if only he had thought to insist upon a deathbed wedding, or something of the sort! It could not really have mattered much to him; everything would have been quite as romantic; and so much more comfortable for all concerned! But the honor of a gentleman, as Miss Dibbs had been taught to know it, seemed to be entirely out of fashion nowadays; like petticoats. Not that she wished in any way to criticize the dead—

Travel had been tried, and found wanting. It did not offer sufficient novelty perhaps to a young woman born, as it were, upon the wing. Miss Dibbs's next-best suggestion was music. "While I realize, my poor brave darling, that you would hardly have the heart just yet to be amused by a play—"

"Why not?" interpolated Emily. "If there are any amusing plays?"

"—still," went on Miss Dibbs, tactfully ignoring this irrelevance, "I always feel—don't you?—that musical performances are somehow different; more elevating, if you know what I mean? Better suited to the requirements of a nature which—which does not find itself quite attuned to anything like pleasure—" She was becoming a trifle involved in her efforts to avoid indelicate references to her friend's grief. "What I mean to say is—opera, for example—oh, not the frivolous French or Italian sort,

naturally! But something really substantial, like Tannhäuser, or Lohengrin—do you not feel, dearest girl, that a performance of Lohengrin, which I see advertised upon the hoardings, might prove cheering?"

Emily felt that it might. They happened to be in Rome at the time, and she had never heard Wagner in Italian. But afterward the ladies were constrained to admit to each other that the Swan Prince, as played by a rotund, swarthy little gentleman whose coat of mail fitted him only too well, and who made up in attack whatever he lacked in accuracy, was not entirely cheering.

Miss Dibbs next turned her beneficent intent toward the gaming tables; they having returned by this time to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where the girl became visibly more apathetic and *distraite* before her eyes. Sports, the inevitable panacea for all British ills, had been declined with thanks. The thought of golf or tennis exhausted her, Emily admitted; she did not trouble to unpack her riding clothes; and as for the *plage*, still gaily tented and lively, despite the lateness of the season, she declined to go near it.

"I do not think I shall ever swim again," she said, quietly.

Her friend made a sound of dismay. "But, why not? Even people in *quite* deep mourning bathe, you know! And you always look so sweet in the water." She recalled with regret a vision of the slim young rose-white body candidly revealed by its

clinging maillot, the exquisite curve of it as she dived; the surprising strength and speed of the girl's easy stroke.

"I seem to have lost my nerve," said Emily; and on an impulse explained why. "You know, I nearly drowned once, there in the surf at Biarritz. A man saved me."

"A man! How perfectly romantic! Who was he?" asked the spinster, eagerly.

"He was a Basque," murmured Emily; and waited, hoping to be asked more questions, hoping that the time had come for her to be able to talk of Esteban at last.

But the good Amelia was not intuitive. "Oh! Only a native. What a pity! So of course nothing came of it," she sighed.

"So of course nothing came of it," repeated Emily, under her breath. She had grown listless again; with that polite, cheerful listlessness Miss Dibbs had come to dread far more than melancholy, and with reason. Steps had clearly to be taken; though step taking was a process Amelia Dibbs left usually to less hesitant natures.

"Really, I see no reason," she announced one morning, with that false, brisk matter-of-factness affected by the dentist or photographer about to go into action, "why you should not take up cards now, my love? One finds them, as one grows older, such a consolation. Not for stakes, of course! . . . That would hardly be suitable in the tragic circumstances. But just a little neighborly hand at whist? Or

bridge, if you prefer? Merely for points?" She spoke with a certain wistfulness; Amelia Dibbs knew how to make her sacrifices on the altar of friendship, none better; but she had missed her little rubber.

Emily replied with some obtuseness that she disliked cards in any form, particularly when played for points. The only thing that made bridge bearable, she said, was a higher stake than one could possibly afford.

"Then," suggested her hostess, still brightly, "we must try Mah Jongg."

"Must we?" murmured her guest. "What is it?"

Miss Dibbs explained that it was a new game, out of China, by America, as it were, played at the moment by all the civilized world. "Really more dominoes than cards, you know—such a pretty idea, I always think, naming the counters for winds and flowers and so on; so Chinese. One fancies mandarins at play, in pagodas, to the song of the bulbul —or do I mean the bullfinch?"

"Possibly the bullfrog?" suggested Emily, whose mental association of the Chinese was chiefly with restaurants or laundries.

"I should not call the sound made by frogs quite singing, should you, dearest?" demurred her friend. "But the parties people give are really too quaint—paper lanterns, you know, and Oriental prizes, and name cards written up and down like Chinese characters; and everybody wearing those Chinese embroidered bed jackets, if they've got them—"

"Quaint, indeed," murmured Emily. "And they eat, I suppose, with chopsticks?"

"N-no, I hadn't heard of that. But—why not?" Her eyes brightened with the possibility. "My dear! Why not give a little Mah Jongg party ourselves—oh, a quite small and informal one, of course!—and serve our tea with chopsticks? Or rather our muffins and cakes; for I am afraid tea would be rather difficult to serve with chopsticks; don't you think?"

"By all means," agreed Emily, kissing her, "let us take up Mah Jongg at once, and give a chopstick party! I burn to begin."

"You will not regret it, I am sure." Miss Dibbs sighed with relief at her success. "Many of my friends quite devote their lives to Mah Jongg nowadays; and one poor dear was positively saved by it from going into a decline, although Scottish Presbyterian by birth. Fancy! You see she lost her Aberdeen, who had been like a child to her for years and years and years—"

"A sort of perennial child?" murmured Emily.

"Yes. They are that way," replied the spinster simply. "They manage to play quite sweetly always, even after their hind legs become a little wabbly."

"Who? The Scottish Presbyterians?" asked Emily, rather bewildered.

"Oh, my dear, I was referring to the Scottish terriers," said Miss Dibbs. "And then one morning when my friend went to his little pillow in the dining room to see why he had not come up with

the breakfast tray for his morning's sugar, there he lay—but I cannot dwell upon it!" She touched her handkerchief to her eyes: Miss Dibbs had herself lost Aberdeens in her day. "My poor friend was utterly inconsolable; her maid told me she found the pillow every morning wet with tears—my friend's pillow, you know, not the dog's. And then, for Christmas, her nephew in Scotland sent her a Mah Jongg set. Such a handsome one that she really felt she had to use it. And now she carries it about with her everywhere, in a specially constructed valise; in case her hostess has not got one, you see?"

"Exit Aberdeen," murmured Emily; wondering if the time had really come for her to choose between card games and pet dogs.

Miss Dibbs was fond of entertaining, had indeed set up a studio for the purpose in the garden adjoining her house; in which she was also understood to paint water colors, or tool leather, or dye batik. Emily was not sure which; so she inquired.

"I block-print," replied her hostess, modestly. "Hadn't you noticed? The curtains, the table runners, my summer frocks? . . . yes, all my work! Not that one really needs a studio to do it in," she added, "but I always think—don't you?—that a studio makes things so informal."

She went on to explain that in studios it was quite all right to serve one's own tea; whereas in a drawing-room it had naturally to be served to one; and Miss Dibbs' little establishment did not run to that.

In her enthusiasm for things Basque, she had employed some years since a native *bonne à tout faire* who did not permit her to employ other servants.

"You see, Margitte is a quite superior person, a *rentière*, in fact; she has 'lands in the sun,' as they express it here so quaintly; though I doubt whether her lands are more than a hut and a vine and a pig-pen—they always manage to keep a pig, no matter how poor they are; like the Irish. She is waiting here for a missing husband, who was probably lost at sea, as they so often are, poor things! and meanwhile she is obliging enough to cook for me. But in the circumstances I hardly like to ask her to wear a cap and apron like ordinary maids; and so of course she cannot serve tea."

The connection was plainer to Miss Dibbs than to her guest, whose memory reverted to a patriarchal picture of the Urruty household dining in their kitchen, with a member of the family serving master and employés alike.

"Once," went on the spinster, sighing, "when I expected some friends over from Biarritz to dinner —quite important people, dearest, our new Ambassador, in fact—I did ask Margitte to make herself as smart as possible; and she assisted at the dinner table, if you can believe me, dressed as if for a costume ball!—in a tall red hood, a stiff white shawl embroidered in the most violent colors, and a crimson apron. Fancy! It was most disconcerting; but I did not like to ask her to change."

"Probably the ceremonial dress of her village.

She was paying your guests a compliment," remarked Emily, with some interest. "The Ambassador should have been pleased."

"The Ambassador," replied Miss Dibbs, "is a very well-bred person. He noticed absolutely nothing, even when she asked me in a perfectly audible whisper whether His Excellency had trouble with his liver that he could not enjoy her good viands? However, she's not a bad cook, and she keeps everything so tidy you really never can find anything you want; and she's very obliging in the garden, too; which is better than having to have a Man around."

Miss Dibbs always spoke of Man either in capitals or italics. She regarded the sex as interesting, but rather dangerous in a household; like making a family pet of an ourang-utan, or training a kangaroo to pull the governess cart. From her point of view, a bearded *bonne* made a preferable substitute.

Emily found Miss Dibbs's little circle, which began to frequent her studio with some assiduity, sympathetic rather than stimulating. It consisted largely of expatriated English and Americans; widows, semi-detached wives, and maiden ladies, of uncertain age and certain income, who found the rate of exchange and the climate favorable, and who managed to lead at long distance a life as much like that of their native Sussex, Connecticut, or Illinois as possible. One patriotic hostess made a cult of entertaining guests at Sunday breakfast upon buckwheat cakes and corn bread, as translated by a Spanish chef out of a Virginia cookbook.

"Of course it's rather nasty—the food I mean," regretted Miss Dibbs, fortifying herself for the ordeal with tablets of soda, "but one appreciates the patriotic sentiment, doesn't one? I myself always like to serve a cold shape for dessert, together with whatever other sweet there happens to be, as one does at home: blancmange, you know, or a Bavarian cream of sorts—"

"Or tinned fruits embalmed in gelatine," murmured Emily, reminiscently. "I dare say Queen Mary herself always has a cold shape for dessert?"

"Oh, I am sure of it," replied Miss Dibbs. "The Queen would naturally employ only English servants in her kitchen; though I am afraid the young Prince prefers the French cuisine, like his poor dear grandpapa."

There were in Miss Dibbs's circle a few gentlemen of a type described by Emily irreverently to herself as cold shapes: superannuated clergy, two or three painters and musicians of a strictly conservative tendency, and several of those retired American business men to be found wandering dejectedly about the resorts of Europe, wondering what to do with themselves next. These made Emily welcome with a distinct brightening of the eye, and were most kind to her; despite a vague memory of some scandal lurking in the background. What was it? . . . her picture in the rotogravure sections from home; a jilting of some sort—an elopement? Surely nothing really improper, at her age, and with such a delicate, fragile bloom of beauty! It is always difficult to

connect a complexion like Emily's with anything really improper.

"I thought best to tell them about the tragic loss of your—your betrothed"—even Miss Dibbs's stoical modernity balked at the bald word "lover"—"and I assure you they quite, quite feel for you, dearest!"

In return Emily was very sweet to them, and allowed herself to be taught Mah Jongg by almost everybody. She was aware that there must be other circles among the expatriates more exhilarating than that of Miss Dibbs: people of the sort with whom she had been wont to *faire la noce* elsewhere, and who would have accepted her, as people usually did accept Emily, at face value. L'Arin Sporting Club —the Société Nautique—these were names not unknown to her: there was undoubtedly a British Club, with all that the title suggests of tennis and polo, yachting and golf and dancing and high play, seasoned by the spice of more or less innocent flirtation with one another's mates—for the unmarried in such circles are rare. But Emily for the moment could not have risen to these high levels. She found herself oddly grateful to her friend Wally for giving her excuse to mourn; his final service to her.

She was often tempted to blurt out the truth about herself, to make somebody understand the thing that had happened to her, so much more difficult to bear than death. If Esteban had merely died, loving her, she would still have him, as she had Wally; always, irrevocably. She could manage to go on

alone, as she had gone before, with head held high, and a heart which, being no longer of use to her, was free to be of service perhaps to others. But to have lost Esteban, living—

Even the spinster's anxious, noncomprehending sympathy might have eased the pain of it a little; put into words, the thing might have seemed less unbearable. But the poor lady had fronted enough when she came to her friend after Wally's death, asking no questions. To turn from the altar and a wealthy waiting baronet, to elope with a perfectly ineligible young man because he had no lungs, was incomprehensible enough; if Miss Dibbs were now asked to believe that there had been all the time a third man in the background, a third and only man, mere loyalty might be unable to withstand the strain. Emily could not afford to risk Miss Dibbs.

Deeper and deeper, therefore, she sank into the odd, amiable apathy which had begun, not with Wally's death, but with the realization that Esteban was not coming back to her; that he had left her, not in a moment of sharp disappointment, but because he found her finally and definitely "not good enough." At first the sense of bitter defeat had stimulated, roused her pride, stirred what her father used facetiously to call, not without reason, the fighting spirit of a Weldon. She had gone down struggling, as a good swimmer will, clutching at this or that, at Sir Harry, Wally, anything to keep herself above water. Later, by some sound instinct, she had managed to turn her mortal hurt into Wally's good.

There is nothing, she reflected—being Emily—which makes sacrifice so easy as having nothing in particular to sacrifice.

But now that there was no longer even the need of sacrifice, why struggle? As once before in the Bay of Biscay, she began to wonder what would happen if she quietly ceased to swim.

Sometimes she envied the mourners in the old Basque churches, women who knelt, wailing and beating their breasts, upon black praying rugs appliquéd in white tears and crosses, muttering over the chaplets —those prayer rings of gold or silver used as rosaries, with little knobs along the edge to represent Hail Marys, and a cross for the Our Father. Once she had encountered a funeral cortège in the early morning, strange black-cowled figures wearing those mourning cloaks which are heirlooms in old Basque families, with falls of lace over their faces; carrying into a Christian church the pagan votive offerings of wax and bread, in order that the soul on its last journey should not lack for food and light. She came to understand the wisdom of such panoplies; grief that must hide itself under a smiling surface goes deeper than grief which may wail and pray and take help from its neighbors.

Emily had never learned to weep; and as for prayer—she would have felt her amateur efforts rather an intrusion upon the time of a God who was doubtless busy with the affairs of her betters. But she liked to sit in a church sometimes where there

were other mourning women, and pretend that she was wailing and praying with the rest.

Once, as she indulged herself in this rather macabre fashion, entertained nevertheless by an image of Sainte Barbe in a stiffly starched new dress, who was suspended from the rafters above as from a gallows, an old priest came out through the curtain of a confessional near by, and paused uncertainly at sight of her face.

"You were waiting to confess to me, my daughter?" he asked.

Emily started. "Oh, no, thank you! I am not Catholic."

"Ah? *Pas encore?*" murmured the priest regretfully, and passed on.

"Not yet" . . . what curious confidence they had, these priests, reflected Emily; like shepherds who leave the bars of the sheepfold down, certain that presently the flock will all come straying home to it. She wondered idly what it might be like to make confession, to speak to some old and gentle stranger like this out of your heart, telling him without reserve your hopes, your fears, your failures—above all, your failures. . . . She broke off with her little ironic grin at thought of the priest's astonished face over certain of her confidences. Doubtless it is only spiritual experiences one recounts to a ghostly confessor; and Emily believed that she had no spiritual experiences to recount.

Possibly people who saw her at this time may have thought otherwise. Certainly they were curiously

kind to her, even strangers. Old men and women whom she passed sometimes gave her the gentle Basque greeting, "God bless your parents"; and if she went to the jetty at five o'clock, with all the native population, to see the fishing boats come in, there was usually someone to engage her in friendly conversation. Mademoiselle was of another province, perhaps?—what, she was Américaine? *Pas possible!*—speaking like one of them, even speaking the Euskara! But mademoiselle had, perhaps, a man with the boats herself? They looked sorry and fell silent when she shook her head without answering. They, too, had lost men with the boats.

It was a life which existed utterly apart from that of Miss Dibbs and her friends, or of the gayer folk who came and went with the English season. Having touched upon it once, Emily was never unaware of it thereafter, as others seemed to be. She knew what rejoicing there was on the jetty when the catch was good; the catch of sardines which had come to take the place of those mighty whales the forebears of these sailors used so hardily to hunt in the Bay of Biscay, sighting them from the Celtic round towers which still stand along the coast, dividing the spoils equally among all the men whose harpoons were found in the leviathan's body. What a descent, from whales to sardines—to humble anchovies! Yet the sardine was, after all, a godsend in these days of Saint-Jean-de-Luz' decline; almost as much of a godsend as the foreigner; not only to the fishermen but to their wives and children, who found employ-

ment in the manufactories for making sardine scales into imitation tortoise shell and mother-of-pearl for the foreign trade.

Emily came to be on nodding terms with many quiet folk who lived in the old houses along the Rue Sopite, or the Rue Saint-Jacques, with their high vine-hung balconies and oddly slanted roofs; rather a triumph for her, as Basques of the upper classes are even more difficult of acquaintance than the humbler people, and regard with an eye of natural suspicion wealthy foreigners who come to exploit their ancestral city, even to their own great profit.

She loved to take long drives about the shore country alone with Anatole, who knew when to talk and when to be silent, as the good Amelia did not always; enjoying the sheer color of it all: golden pumpkins, strings of red pepper and silver garlic drying against the walls of the farmhouses, orange berries of the sorb trees, sheets of yellow samphire stretching down to the edge of a deep blue water; and everywhere the lovely feathery bracken being gathered for the winter stables, carried to the barns piled high behind white, slow-moving oxen. In a land visited by winds from Africa, November often blooms like May; as if any season of birth must needs be beautiful, whether it be birth of winter or of summer.

They lingered on the bridge over the Bidassoa into Spain, sometimes, watching the boys fish for *platachés* with pointed sticks. Whenever there was a festival in a near-by village Anatole had learned to inform

himself, so that his lady might see again the *farandole* or the *saut Basque;* light and whirling and oddly impersonal, more an athletic exercise than a dance. The only time he had heard her laugh aloud for weeks was over the efforts of a sturdy lad to climb the greased Mat de Cocagne, at such a fair, the "mast of plenty," from whose tip, as reward for the intrepid, hung a purse, a pair of fat ducks, and a scarlet sash; and when the lad finally gave up the effort in chagrin, Emily had flung him her own purse, bidding Anatole drive hastily away before he could decline it. Fancy, she thought with some pleasure, Emily Weldon being able to fling purses about like that!

Anatole's Provençal gift of intuition told him that his lady was, for some reason, deeply interested in the native life. It was he who kept her informed when there was to be especially good *pelota* at the *frontón* of Campos Berri or of Ciboure or of Ascain; some famous *cantara* to chant the score of *tantos* in rhyme, perhaps; or even De Cambo himself to play, amid affectionate shouts of "*Lindo!* pretty one!" or "Ah, ah, mimule, little monkey flower!"

"One has it," informed Anatole, "that this fellow De Cambo is professional world champion of the *pelota,* but that there is another who can beat him without the *chistera;* an amateur—one Esteban Urruty, mademoiselle recalls the name?—there, in our own village?"

Yes, mademoiselle recalled the name. She smiled

at her chauffeur rather dimly because he had called it "their own village."

There existed between herself and Wally's former servant, whom she had inherited, a delicate nuance of intimacy, a mutually respectful familiarity which expressed itself in manner rather than in words. "We know what we know!" said the protective back of Anatole's head as he drove, the proffered curve of his arm for her hand when she alighted, the significant touch of glove to cap visor. "Ah, yes, we share our memories, we two! But—we keep them to ourselves, *n'est-ce pas?*"

It shamed her a little to have Anatole believe she mourned only for young Wallace, deeply as she missed her friend.

The bearded grenadier Margitte, in Miss Dibbs's kitchen, had also entered into the general conspiracy to cheer Emily, and spent much thought and time in the effort to concoct dishes to tempt her failing appetite.

"But what would you?" she shrugged at Anatole, who knew where to make himself comfortable. "A woman's heart is not as that of a man, to be located in the *estomac—mais non!* There are times, for a woman, when to eat is not enough. Yet," she continued frowning, "what have we here? *Alors*, it is a chagrin which deranges the appetite, rather than a sorrow! For the dead one has tears; one has souvenirs of the most tragic—but one has not love-sickness! That is for the living. I tell you, I who speak!"—Margitte had been crossed in love more

than once; she knew the symptoms—"You assure me the lover of mademoiselle is veritably no more?"

But perfectly, sighed Anatole; had not he himself assisted to lay the unfortunate Monsieur Wally in his grave? The dead do not walk!

"The dead, no. But love, that continues to walk!" muttered Margitte, with a deep contralto sigh. "*Mais bien sûr!*"

Emily, quick to sense unspoken sympathy in those about her nowadays, made some effort to establish relations with the *bonne à tout faire,* using such phrases of the native tongue as she had acquired; but without success. The woman only muttered evasive replies, in French. Emily realized at last that Margitte did not understand her. "Of what valley are you?" she asked in some curiosity; she had believed Euskara to be spoken throughout the Pyrenees.

"Me, I am of Bethmal, mademoiselle, in the region of the Ariège. There one has not the *langue brute Basque.* One speaks a tongue persons may comprehend. But," she added, "it is true that I am Basquaise by marriage. I have married myself with a Basque. And what is more," she added, with a withering glance at Anatole, obligingly polishing boots which were not his to polish, "I shall continue to marry myself with Basques! They know how to be faithful, those ones. It is they who keep the fowl in the pot, they who bring home the fish money before they retire to the *estaminet. À quoi bon vouloir descendre?*"

"One has asked you to so descend, perhaps?" murmured Anatole innocently from the background.

She ignored him. "Basques are, in effect, the only husbands!" she continued with growing warmth. "But difficult to get—ah, *mais oui!*—difficult to get."

"In fact, almost impossible," murmured Emily to herself, with her little grin; she wondered sometimes to what desperate straits she must be reduced before she ceased to grin at herself.

"Mademoiselle has said?" . . .

"Merely that I agree with you, Margitte: Basques are the only husbands—but difficult to get," answered the girl, her voice unexpectedly breaking over it.

The Bethmalaise frowned after her, thoughtfully. Then for no reason that was apparent, she took the astonished Anatole by the ear and led him to the kitchen door.

"Out with you!" she remarked in her deep, booming bass. "March! *Va t'en!* We have had enough here of a sex like yours. *Flâneurs! Blagueurs!* Derangers of a young woman's appetite!"

"I?" protested the injured Anatole. "I have deranged a young woman's appetite?" He seemed rather pleased with the idea, however. The door slammed in his face.

Miss Dibbs had suggested more than once, being of a kindly conscience, that Emily ought to go to see her former stepmother, living so near them at Biarritz; or at least to let her know of her presence in the neighborhood; and at length Emily yielded

to persuasion. She told Anatole to drive them one day to Biarritz, which she had hitherto avoided. But as they came in sight of the shell-shaped cove of the Port Vieux, on whose beach she had first seen Esteban, and where now another boat was lying at harbor as the yacht *Gathid* had lain, she bade him sharply to turn again and go back. She gave as her excuse the dread of painful questioning.

They overtook as they left the town a figure on a bicycle, which was vaguely familiar; not wearing the elaborate "sporting" so dear to Frenchmen, nor yet the comfortable tweed plus-fours of the English, but dressed in a shabby blue sack coat, a flowing tie, *espadrilles*, and the inevitable Basque *béret*. Anatole stopped the car abruptly, beaming over his shoulder at the ladies. He always enjoyed the company of his betters.

"Mademoiselle has observed? It is the literary gentleman from our village—Monsieur le Comte des Luynes!—whose visits Monsieur Wally found of so elevating a nature."

Emily greeted with a certain eagerness this friend and neighbor of Esteban, who might without being asked give her news of him. But Etcheverray proved singularly uncommunicative, for one who was only half Basque. He was, he told them, on his way home to L'Ey Kahatcia.

"Not by wheel?" protested Emily. "Surely you don't intend to push a bicycle from peak to peak about the Pyrenees?"

"Why not?" He patted the saddle of it affec-

tionately. "It has carried me far and well, this faithful Rozinante of mine; who eats less and tires less than other steeds. You unfortunate rich do not appreciate the humble pleasures of the poor."

He had been making a little holiday on the sea, he explained, with a friend who had a boat; and was now in haste to return to his hills again.

"We Pyreneans are amphibious, you know; when we are on the sea, our hearts rush to the hills, and when we are in the mountains, we yearn for the sea again. 'How happy I could be with either, were t'other dear charmer away!' as your English song goes." Etcheverray, like many of his people, spoke perfect English. He had intended, he added, to give himself the pleasure to call on the ladies as he passed through Saint-Jean-de-Luz, on his way to verify some data for his book in a certain ancient *ilerri* beyond the town.

"You knew I was at Saint-Jean-de-Luz?" asked Emily, eagerly.

"But naturally, mademoiselle." He did not mention from what source.

Miss Dibbs's ears had pricked at mention of the *ilerri;* she had a sentimental leaning toward graveyards, especially ancient Basque ones.

"Do let us drive you there," she urged in a sudden flutter of hospitality. "The distance is nothing in a car. And stop with us for dinner afterward. I am sure it would be good for my young friend to see more of gentlemen; and graveyards are always so delightful. The chauffeur can take your wheel

up in front with him quite easily; can't you, Anatole?"

"I shall regard it, M'sieu' le Comte, as an honor!" sonorously replied Anatole, who had his Provençal reverence for all things literary, even bicycles.

The savant accepted without demur; and presently succeeded in making the graveyard more interesting than Emily had known graveyards could be. The discoid stones found in so many of the ancient *ilerri,* he explained to them, were lineal descendants of the round bucklers placed by Assyrians on the tombs of their warriors. "These also are placed only over the graves of fighting men—though it would be difficult to find any Basques who have not at one time or another been fighting men!"

"Do you mean to tell us," asked Miss Dibbs with a little shiver of pleasure, "that your people are descended from the Assyrians—those Assyrians who came down like a wolf on the fold?"

"Unless," assented the count, smiling, "they were descended from us! We have come down ourselves, I fear, like wolves on many folds.—My people are not a foundling race, as someone has said, left on the doorstone of Europe. We are Europe," he added, simply. "But many races in passing have left their souvenirs."

He pointed out other symbols as ancient as the Assyrian buckler: the *tomoyé* of Japan, the swastika of India, the serpent, the tree of life, and everywhere that most ancient worship of all, the sun symbol. These were carved on tabular monuments

of granite as enduring as the hills from which they came. Others more ancient-looking, of rough red sandstone, were in reality quite modern, he told them, being only of the Eighth Century; whereas the elaborate tall crosses with rounded arms, carved in chalices and seven-branch candlesticks, were quite a mushroom growth, dating from only the Seventeenth Century.

"The century in which my country was first settled!" commented Emily dryly; and Miss Dibbs sighed in sympathy. "What an upstart it makes one feel! And I have always been rather bucked by the idea of having an ancestor who fought in the battle of Hastings."

"There are more desirable things than age," commented the count politely, "in either men or nations."

He called their attention to a stone in the floor of the deep church porch, over one of those tombs which are always sold with the houses of the family they belong to. The owner, one Esponda by name, was "given the possession of this tomb in order that he and his may have the enjoyment thereof forever."

"And yet," remarked Etcheverray gravely, "one wonders whether Esponda entirely enjoys his privilege, after all?"

Miss Dibbs saw the point of this comment on the way home, and laughed immoderately. "He meant, don't you see?"—she explained to Emily—"that it is better for a man or a nation to be not quite

so old, and to be still alive. Clever; oh, very clever! Your friend the count is quite a humorist, isn't he?"

Both ladies were somewhat astonished by the welcome accorded their guest by the *bonne* Margitte, when she opened the door to them. There was a sudden fusillade of exclamations, greetings, questions; when he held out his hand to her, laughing, she seized it in both her own and would have kissed it, had he not forbidden her sharply. She ran for a brush and began dusting his coat with passion, meanwhile keeping up a steady stream of exclamations and questions; nor would she be quieted until Etcheverray promised to make a visit to her kitchen immediately after dinner.

"You seem," remarked Emily, "to know our maid of all work?"

He explained that she had married a man of their village. "I had occasion to make them a little wedding gift—you know how these peasants would rather own the deed to a hillside onion patch than to a mansion in heaven!"

"So you are responsible for Margitte's 'lands in the sun'?" she asked in some surprise; noting the savant's shabby coat, and remembering the condition of his half-ruined castle in the hills, L'Ey Kahatcia.

"We always give our people a bit of property when they marry." He added with a smile, perhaps sensing her thought: "Land being the only thing of which the Etcheverray still have more than they require."

He was as good as his word, and reminded Emily

to take him later to Margitte's kitchen, whose red tiles were still wet from the extra scrubbing they had just received; a pleasant room, with its dresser of shining pewter, its red-checked curtains, its chromos of the saints in bright gilt frames, and the holy-water stoup with a sprig of box above. Emily preferred it herself to any other room *chez Dibbs*, even the much-vaunted studio. But she wondered a little at the length of the count's visit there. From the salon above, the two could be heard chatting along steadily, often both at once, in a dialect which was unfamiliar to both ladies.

"What language were you speaking with Margitte?" Emily could not resist asking later. "Not Basque? And certainly not French?"

He explained that it was the Catalan. "Almost every valley with us has a different dialect; certainly every province. There are even, as you may know, different varieties of the Euskara, so that the spelling and the sound frequently confuse. But *au fond*, the Euskara is all the same root language; all 'clearly speaking,' as the name has it; not blurred and rough, like the Catalan, or full of elisions and words of several meanings, like the French, nor yet drawing and overpretty, like the Provençal, the Langue d'Oc. The name 'clearly speaking,' very well describes our tongue."

"And your people," said Emily thoughtfully. Nothing drawling or confused or overpretty about them!

The count gave her a nod of appreciation. "If

'clearly speaking' describes us, mademoiselle, the phrase to describe you should be 'clearly thinking.'"

The girl sighed. "Yes, that is true. I cannot help thinking clearly—too clearly, Etcheverray. But that doesn't mean that I act very clearly. On the contrary!"

"In which case," suggested the other, lightly, "it would be well to marry—when you marry again—a man who acts clearly. The combination should be valuable."

Like Esteban, she thought with a pang; there was a man who acted clearly: saw what he wanted and took it, saw what he did not want, and cast it aside. . . . Aloud she said, on an impulse which had moved her once before, "I was never married, Etcheverray. I allowed you there in the village to think so, because—"

He stopped her with a quick gesture. "But, I understand!" Unexpectedly he bent over her hand and kissed it. "We all understand," he added with gentle significance, "and—permit me to say that we honor you, mademoiselle."

That was the only reference he made to the Urruty family. She let him go without asking any of the questions she had on her lips. What was the use of questions? . . .

From the period of the count's visit, Margitte became a changed woman; ceased to mutter and frown and stand with arms akimbo while meals were served, daring her ladies not to enjoy her good

viands; and became affable, mysterious, given to laying a finger against the nose and looking artful.

"What can have come over her?" Miss Dibbs asked nervously of Emily. "She is positively genial. Do you suppose it can be an illness coming on? Or another sailor? The poor woman is constantly becoming betrothed to sailors and getting deserted by them; it is most disconcerting. But this time she has quite an air of triumph; have you noticed? You do not suppose it could be Anatole?"

"Dear me, I hope not!" murmured his mistress. "Anatole is a shocking flirt! I must speak to him."

But Anatole denied the imputation with some heat. "I, of my experience? Mademoiselle regards me as one to seek my little adventure among persons with such a deportment of the savage? Ah, no; one makes oneself agreeable, *n'est-ce pas?* One polishes a boot here and there, one assists to prepare the *légumes*—but these things do not compromise. *Soyez tranquille,* mademoiselle! there shall be only such little attentions as improve the general tenor of the cuisine."

The change in Margitte was simultaneous with the appearance of the first floral offering on Miss Dibbs' doorstep, addressed in flowing purple ink to La Mademoiselle Américaine: a stiff little bouquet in a paper holder, followed in rapid succession by other bouquets, by fruits, by flat baskets of fish, even of prawns—that delicacy so dear to the southern coast, a small crustacean with a curiously flowerlike odor. Once it was a singing bird in a cage of twisted

osier, such as sailors make; once a sash of blue ribbon, such a fairing as peasant lovers bring home to their sweethearts from a fête. To open the door each morning became an adventure shared by all the household. With each gift, the manner of the *bonne à tout faire* grew more mysterious and proprietary.

"One would fancy," said her mistress, much intrigued, "that all these gifts were intended for herself! Do you suppose she knows something about the anonymous donor? Had I not better question her?"

"By no means," said Emily hastily. "The donor will probably cease to be anonymous soon enough!" While these naïve attentions touched and amused her as she had not been amused for weeks, she preferred to regard them as coming abstractly from Esteban's people; some susceptible young sailor who had seen her at the jetty, perhaps; some sentimental fisherman with a taste for blondes.

Miss Dibbs herself secretly and hopefully suspected the Comte des Luynes, whose admiration of the girl was evident. A trifle staid, perhaps, for her reckless youth; and rather too literary in his appearance—there had been a fringed suggestion about the cuffs. Still a title is a title, even on the Continent.

Her curiosity could not long support the strain. Emily overheard her consulting the oracle of the kitchen; any conversation in which Margitte took part was easy to overhear.

"Is it a Basque custom—all these gifts coming to

Miss Weldon with no name attached? So unusual! Do you know what it means?"

The woman's robust laughter shook the walls. "If I know what it means? Ah, *Dieu*, does a babe at the breast not know what it means? But, a lover, mademoiselle! what else? A fine new lover for *la pauvrette*, so that soon she will begin to rouge the lips, and *friser* the hair, and take the proper interest in an omelette again."

"You forget yourself, Margitte!" said the lady, shocked but pleased. "Miss Weldon would certainly not be interested in—in admirers at such a time. Her heart, as you know, is in the grave."

"*Enfin*," cried the other in high good humor, "it must come out again, *tout de suite!* For me, I think it is already out—else why does she receive the gifts of courtship, mademoiselle? Why does she place so carefully the flowers in water, why does she eat the little fishes, why does she hang the bird in her window for all the world to see? *Hein?* I ask myself! Ah, ah," she cried, smacking her lips with unction, "there is nothing so consoling to a heart in the grave as a good sound kiss upon the mouth!"

Her mistress fled the kitchen in dismay. "Really," she murmured to Emily, "Margitte has, I fear, a very coarse nature! And I am afraid we have made a mistake, my dear, in receiving these anonymous presents. We should have let them lie upon the doorstep, even if they spoiled there, and smelled unpleasantly."

Emily, however, had come to her own conclu-

sions about the anonymous presents; she having caught Margitte, unnoted, in the act of patronizing the public letter writer in the Place, who was inscribing certain pasteboards elaborately in purple swirls and curlicues of ink.

"The good soul is trying to rouse my interest in life again by putting these surprises on the doorstep herself," she thought; and valued the offerings none the less for that. Men, she reflected, are easy enough to attract, being predisposed in one's favor by habit, the cosmic urge, and other useful dispensations of Providence; but to attract the affection of other women, especially of serving women—that was a feat of which the girl was newly and justly proud.

She was unprepared, however, for the *basauflûte.* No woman of that country plays a *basauflûte;* its use is sacred to men, to fête days, and to the courting season.

It came as the two ladies sat reading together, from the depths of the dark garden, where a high tide lapped its soft whisper on the sands; a low, windy breath of music, hardly more than a whisper itself, at the first note of which Emily sat suddenly erect, listening. Miss Dibbs listened, too, as she turned the pages of her book; sighing—she hardly knew why. Another of Margitte's followers, she supposed; she would never again employ widows of property in her kitchen.

The music died, and did not reappear; and Miss Dibbs, looking up presently in some relief, realized

that she was alone. Emily had gone. She went to the window, and saw the girl descending the steps into the dark garden; slowly, vaguely, like a sleep-walker; the delicate lace scarf she wore trailing behind her in the dust.

This, thought Miss Dibbs in annoyance, is really indiscreet! She will take cold on the damp ground; it feels like summer, but it isn't summer; and suppose there really is a Man about? She opened her lips to utter a warning; and paused, paralyzed. There was a Man! . . . she saw a stalwart masculine figure distinctly outlined against the silvery water of the bay. She noted also a large white yacht moored just beyond, quite close in—but yachts meant nothing to Amelia Dibbs just then. Her horrified gaze returned to the intruder; toward whom Emily continued to move, falteringly; at last with a little run. Was the girl crazed? Miss Dibbs clapped her hands to her lips with a small scream. The two figures had met; they appeared to be merging into one figure!

Being a woman of strictest honor, the spinster turned at this point and fled into her room, where she sat down on the edge of her bed, and breathed hard.

Below in the garden it was very still. Emily, leaning back in Esteban's arms, only gazed at him; gazed and gazed, as if his eyes were some far horizon to which her soul had taken wing. He waited; he dared not rouse her too suddenly from this pale

trance; only the grip of his arms grew close and stronger, and the arms trembled.

Minutes passed. Suddenly out of the laurel bush beside them spoke an urgent whisper: "*Mais, dépêchez vous donc,* M'sieu' Esteban! Kiss her, and be done with it! Is one to wait forever?"

It was not Daphne whose voice spoke from the laurel bush, but the *bonne à tout faire,* intent on bringing affairs to a suitable conclusion.

The details of her wedding remained always rather vague to Emily. She was none too sure, indeed, that she had been properly married, although it seemed probable, in view of Miss Dibbs' marked leaning toward the proprieties. Margitte, too, enlisted in the service of a *chenhango,* that family friend who in Basque countries arranges all details of birth, death and marriage, had full regard for the proprieties; as practiced, at least, in the valley of Bethmal. She had undertaken, at the request of her former employer and benefactor, Etcheverray, Comte des Luynes, to assist a family neighbor with the details of a suitable courtship; men in these affairs being proverbially helpless. It was she who had proposed to the two gentlemen the idea of the anonymous gifts, as a sort of experimental advance; she who had notified Esteban, hovering in the background, when she considered the moment propitious. Suppose he had arrived, in his hot young foolishness, at a time when mademoiselle still considered it necessary for her heart to remain in the grave? What misfortune!

Miss Dibbs, once the first shock of it was over, became an eager if somewhat anxious ally. "I always feel," she sighed to her coadjutor, "that once two young people have *quite* made up their minds, the sooner they get it all over with, the better for everybody. Otherwise everyone loses so much sleep!"

"*N'est-ce pas?*" agreed the Bethmalaise, chuckling deeply.

Miss Dibbs had already lost rather more sleep than, at her age, she could afford. On that first amazing evening, when she had summoned up sufficient temerity to brave the terrors of the dark garden in the defense of her young, she had been greeted by the lovers' quiet announcement that they never intended to be separated again so long as they both should live.

"We can't be," said Emily very simply. "Esteban has come to take me away with him tonight."

"But," gasped the spinster, "it is after midnight! Even if this gentleman is not the entire stranger to you that he is to me, how could you get married at such an hour, without a license, or a ring, or anything of the sort?"

They did not answer; they did not appear to be listening. They were gazing at each other as if no one else were present; and Miss Dibbs felt, nervously, that at any moment they might begin to merge again.

She compromised with Esteban at last on a gentleman's agreement; he guaranteeing himself not to

elope with her charge, nor to abduct her, nor to do anything rash until the customary formalities were complied with; on condition that she for her part made no effort to separate them, at any time, for any reason whatsoever.

"I have a fear, *chère mademoiselle,*" confessed Esteban disarmingly, "to let this Emilie out of my sight again lest she disappear from me. You know how that is?"

Miss Dibbs, in a flutter of sympathy, knew how it was, indeed; the girl had sudden ways! But what to do? Theirs, she explained, was a household of women. She, a spinster, could hardly ask a gentleman to stop under the same roof with them; especially under the romantic circumstances. It would be most improper! Besides, she added as an afterthought, her only guest room was already occupied by Emily.

"I beg of you not to discommode yourself, mademoiselle," urged Esteban courteously; "the night is fine. We shall be quite comfortable here in the garden."

"We!" gasped Miss Dibbs. Surely they did not expect to spend the rest of the night together in the garden? What would people say?

"What people?" dreamily asked Emily.

The agitated lady had a sudden saving thought of her studio, which was of, and yet certainly not in, the house. To what more suitable purpose could artistic informality be put? There was a wide window seat, she explained, quite nicely padded, from

which if he wished, an anxious lover could keep one eye upon Emily's window; while he slept, as it were, with the other.

Toward dawn, therefore, the uninvited guest retired to the studio window seat; while Miss Dibbs led Emily firmly to her bed: a strangely gentle Emily, star-eyed and very still, free for once of her little mocking smile, and with such an aureole of loveliness about her that the spinster found herself quite awed, as in the presence of something holy. But she herself made no effort to sleep during what little remained of the night; nor even to undress. At intervals from the studio sounded the faint disturbing whisper of a *basauflûte;* it seemed best to be prepared for anything.

As early as possible after sunrise, she hurried in search of the nearest Catholic priest, who happened to be the same old man to whom Emily had considered making confession.

"My young friend says she is quite willing to become a Catholic, or a Mohammedan, or a Hottentot, or anything at all," she explained, too agitated to re-word the message more courteously, "so long as she can become it quickly, and get married. And really, Father," gasped the poor lady, with a thought to Emily's past performances in this line, "I am afraid that if we do *not* get them married very quickly, they will go away together without waiting for the ceremony! Young people are so—so impetuous nowadays."

The prelate smiled. "What will become of the

world when its young cease to be impetuous?" he murmured. "We need not distress ourselves, madame: true love has made many a good Catholic out of an indifferent heretic. Urruty has already spoken to me of this; he is a good boy. The Church knows how to provide for such blessed impetuosity!"

Anatole, on the suggestion of Margitte, had disappeared at sunrise and returned at evening—it was a record run—conveying as many of the Urruty household as his car would hold; rather more, in fact. The big machine was top-heavy with hastily assembled luggage, boxes, hampers, valises; at the back were strapped a large cask of Jurançon wine, and a crate of fowls; and from each window peered out the face of an excited and wide-eyed little sister.

Esteban, laughing his pleasure aloud, greeted in turn on either cheek Madame Urruty; his father Pedro; his stepmother Fancine; Nacio, still in shepherd's clothes, for he had been taken straight from the pastures; Etcheverray, their neighbor; and last the little girls, Bette carrying in both arms a large closed basket.

"What?" cried the bridegroom, lifting her, hamper and all, high in air in order to kiss her more conveniently. "Do you tell me I am to be married without the counsel and support of our friend Nagarro?"

"For so large a dog there was unfortunately no space," explained the capable Bette regretfully. "But regard, Steban, whom I have brought instead! The animals of our house will not feel slighted." She

opened her basket to disclose the ruffled and indignant person of Gathid the cat, attired in a large white bow.

It was the matriarch who demanded the presence of Emily's stepmother at the impending nuptials. "While her morals, no doubt, leave something to be desired," she said, "that is not our affair—the poor woman has the misfortune to be a heretic. In any case it is her right, as a representative of the bride's family, to be present. See to this, my son."

Esteban obediently saw to it; and Suzanne appeared with good-natured promptitude, bearing no ill will—whatever the state of her morals, her manners were always amiable. She embraced her former charge emotionally.

"As you see, I am speechless, utterly speechless! A few more such shocks, and I shall not answer for the consequences. Why did you not confide in me, my poor dear child? Surely I should have been of more assistance to you than an inexperienced old maid! Not that you needed much assistance, I must say. Practically three husbands in one year—Sir Harry, that tragic Wallace boy—how my heart ached for you; but really, my dear, *what* an escapade!—and now, this. Oh, you sly puss, you sly puss! They say"—she lowered her voice to the proper pitch for maternal confidences—"that it is one of the really big fortunes of the country; and he handsome enough to be a pauper, at that! You are so wise not to delay. And what," she finished

coming down to the essentials, "have you planned to be married in, darling girl?"

Emily replied vaguely that she did not know; the priest's house, perhaps; or Miss Dibbs's studio, or possibly the church itself; Esteban would arrange.

Suzanne stared, incredulous. "I believe, on my soul, that you haven't given a thought to your first wedding dress!" she gasped; and went at once into a committee of the whole.

The result was a vision glimmering white under a cloud of tulle, with a coronet of camellias, her own flower; so that Anatole, himself rather elegant in a white cockade and new white gloves, was gratified by his lady's appearance as she came out to the waiting car which had carried them through such varied adventures; moving still like one in a dream from which she did not care to wake.

"Ah, ah, if the poor Monsieur Wally could but have lived to see this day!" he was moved to murmur; to the dismay of Miss Dibbs, who felt the reference to be indelicate.

Emily came out of her dream long enough to smile at him through tears. "You think he would be glad, Anatole?"

"All who have loved mademoiselle must be glad this day," murmured the little Provençal with great sincerity.

She held out her hand to him, as if he were not only a servant but a man; and Anatole bent over it as if he were not only a man, but a gentleman. That sort of thing comes easily in Provence.

They drove by devious ways to the church, the hood considerably lowered for the benefit of the pleased populace, the car itself a triumphal chariot decked lavishly in white ribbon and paper flowers. Emily was unprepared for quite so much publicity. She nodded and smiled automatically, however, in response to various small cheers, after the fashion of royalty; conscious only that Esteban was waiting at the church beyond, and that the waiting could not be long.

Nor was theirs the quiet little ceremony she had imagined it, they two alone together exchanging their vows at God's altar in the presence of a few people whom they loved. Miss Dibbs had not been able to resist hinting to several friends of the romance about to blossom in their midst, funeral-baked meats so pleasantly furnishing forth a marriage table; so that the Mah Jongg players were out in force; to say nothing of the growing crowds who had followed Anatole's little parade to the church, and now filled it to overflowing.

A few details impressed themselves on Emily's vision, to be appreciated later: the matriarch, a stately Goya portrait in voluminous black silk, a mantilla of priceless lace floating from her tall comb, fine emeralds flashing at throat and ears: the little sisters, pressed into service as bridesmaids, with stiffly starched first-communion dresses and veils, creaking up the aisle in the newness of patent-leather boots; their mother Fancine, an overstuffed pincushion done in pink satin; Pedro, entering the church with Este-

ban, his one arm thrown affectionately across the shoulders of his tall son as if he were still a little lad; and most striking figure of all, Margitte the Bethmalaise, in full ceremonial regalia, scarlet hood, upturned sabots, plaited crimson apron and all, complete.

"For it is not often," she remarked acridly to her mistress, "that one has nowadays the opportunity to wear the wedding costume; men being what they are!"

At the moment when the old priest mumbled the Latin which made them irrevocably man and wife, it was Margitte who produced from under her embroidered shoulder shawl a hen, decked suitably as for sacrifice, which she caused to cluck painfully at the top of its lungs during the rest of the ceremony, thus assuring all possible good fortune to the marrying pair.

Undoubtedly they could never have managed it without Margitte. It was she who led the pair ceremonially to her kitchen *armoire*, to receive the traditional bread and wine of plenty; she who caused them to quaff the bitter brew together—a brew so bitter that Emily choked over it—in order to increase the sweetness of their happiness by contrast. It was Margitte, also, who had caused long tables to be laid in the garden for an impromptu wedding feast. When Miss Dibbs, who did not know that there was to be a feast, diffidently suggested the drawing-room or the studio as offering greater

privacy, the *bonne à tout faire* laughed aloud: "Ah, *mon Dieu!* and who wants privacy at a wedding?"

Whether they wanted it or not, they did not get it. Miss Dibbs gazed in bewilderment at the guests who began to arrive in increasing numbers to drink the health of the bridal pair. Could all these people have been invited? And by whom? She had spoken herself to a few English and American friends; but here were natives, too, natives of all sorts; her neighbors in the Sainte Barbe quarter; shop people, fishermen in their Sunday clothes, sailors from Ciboure, quite humble folk and other strangers who appeared to be gentlepeople—whoever passed in the street turned into her garden as if he were expected there, and was made most courteously welcome by Esteban, and his father, and the stately, simple old woman in magnificent emeralds whom they called Madre. Many who bowed before the bride ceremonially repeated a certain phrase which Miss Dibbs did not quite catch, fortunately; her ear remaining invulnerably English despite many years of residence abroad. These were wishing Emily a healthy and a productive future.

"Do not derange yourself, mademoiselle!" reassured the *bonne à tout faire,* noting her mistress' dismay. "There will be enough for all! Never shall it be said that one from the Vallée Bethmal was caught by wedding guests with an empty larder!"

That it was Miss Dibbs's larder did not occur, apparently, to anyone; and indeed the various ham-

pers and crates and casks brought down from the hills in Anatole's car were being put to equally good usage. Loaves and fishes abounded; Jurançon and hydromel flowed more and more freely; champagne corks began to pop, thanks to the generosity of Suzanne's husband; who had contributed also from his hotel kitchens at Biarritz a magnificent cake, with a complete wedding party done in sugar on the top. To the spinster's confused mind the wedding feast began to partake of the nature of a miracle.

A long table was set under the trees for the bridal pair and their more immediate friends; another at a discreet distance for the chosen companions of Anatole and Margitte, including certain sailormen from the yacht's boat now beached at the foot of the garden, waiting. From these suddenly arose a sort of chantey, in which the Basques at the wedding table joined with gusto, Madame Urruty with the rest. Emily listened in astonishment. "Why, but they are singing one of our own college songs—singing it in Basque!" she exclaimed.

"As my people have been singing it for several hundred years, *gatchutcha*," murmured Esteban.

Other Americans caught the familiar air, and joined in, eagerly. "For he's a jolly good fellow!" they sang; while Anatole, head wagging, marking time with a work for baton, shouted to the same tune a lusty:

"Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre—
"Mironton, tonton, mirontaine!"

Emily slipped her hand into her husband's, aware of a foolish lump in her throat. "Just one great family after all," she whispered, "the old and young of us together!" It happened to be the only family the girl could claim for her own.

What ice remained had been broken by the singing. Speeches were made, toasts and compliments in three languages; the rector of the English church (Miss Dibbs's rector) was to be seen, to her great relief, clinking glasses amicably with the gentle old Jesuit who had married Emily to young Urruty. Esteban himself was forced to make a speech, his first. He rose, still firmly clasping his wife's hand, and said very boyishly and simply, "My friends, this is the hour for which I was born. And now you will please to go away!"

They accepted the hint, with shouts of laughter; but first the Anglo-Saxons, fired by a sudden determination to make this wedding as much as possible "like home," raided the house for rice and slippers; under a pelting hail of which the bridal pair ran down the path to the beach. The sailors were before them; each sprang to his oar. Esteban seized his bride in his arms and strode out into the water to place her in the stern, tulle and satin floating recklessly behind them. Pedro pushed at the prow, Esteban leaped in beside Emily; they were off!—Miss Dibbs congratulating herself with fervor that nothing embarrassing had occurred. With foreign weddings, one could never be sure.

Anatole, however, was saving himself for a climax.

Stirred by the patriotic zeal of the Anglo-Saxons, he also had procured footgear; and as the boat pulled rapidly away under a final rain of missiles, he raised his arm for the dramatic coup. But he was no *pelota* player: his aim missed; his offering fell short of the boat and into the water, where it floated, only too visible to all. It was an infant's shoe.

The English blushed. The Americans giggled. A groan arose, a French groan. *"Il se perd! Il se perd!"* If it should sink—ah, *Dieu!* It it should fail of recovery and become permanently engulfed—what an augury!

But it did not sink. The sailors stopped rowing instantly. With patient inviting motions of the oars they urged it toward the boat. The little shoe continued to bob and dip innocently out to sea. "Ah, ah, if one had but Nagarro!" cried Bette, despairingly.

It gave the idea. A sailor leaped into the sea himself, like a faithful dog, and returned with the omen safe between his teeth.

On shore cheers mingled with tears; Suzanne, slightly flushed with wine, feeling that the moment had come to register maternal emotion. Anatole, also slightly flushed, flung an arm of triumph about Margitte, and kissed her full upon the lips. It was, as he explained at once, purely impersonal, merely a tribute from all mankind to the sex which charms; and the resounding smack with which she countered was also quite impersonal, the *riposte* of the sex which charms for that which ever deceives.

It happened to be the episode Emily remembered most clearly out of all her wedding; that and the sudden shout of the sailors as she and Esteban set foot at last, together, on the deck of the *Gathid;* a high, wild, ringing cry, echoing back from other boats in the Porte des Pêcheurs, from the jetty, from all along the shore, dying away into the hills. For the second time she had received the Basque salute, the *irrezina:*

"Ahai-i-i-i Heu! Heu! Urruty! Urruty! Ahai-i-i-i-i-"

Remembering, Emily raised her head and smiled up proudly at the ghostly war banners, the dim old portraits of persons strange to her, and long since dead. Among them hung her own, now; she too was by way of becoming an ancestor to this house. Unafraid, she took her solitary candle, and climbed the worn stone stairs to the room she would share tonight only with Esteban's children. She knew that out at sea her lover, alone like herself in their ship of dreams, would be remembering with her.

NOSTALGIA

CHAPTER EIGHT

NOSTALGIA: which speaks for itself, and supplies its own answer

IT IS a queer and unaccountable affliction when it comes, like seasickness; one moment the ocean far as eye can see is all sunny breaking lights, and color, and rhythmic movement; the next it has become a menace, an unreasoning terror, a hideous dread in the center of being.

So it was with Emily; one moment life spread about her serene and cool and secure as the high meadows among which she dwelt; the next, some passing flight of birds, the chug-a-chug of a motor along the Route des Pyrenées—perhaps the faint insistent calling of a violin from a gypsy camp below the hill—set up in her so strange and sudden a longing that she was aghast. Not a longing for any place she had once called home; nor for any person she had once loved better than home. Her mother she could not remember; her father, charming as he made it his business in life to be, was more so in the retrospect than in the flesh—Emily always found it difficult to love where she did not admire. Her heart, she would have said, was most securely anchored here where her husband belonged, her children. And yet—

It is the places which never were one misses most;

the people one has never known, the things which will never happen now, thought Emily, dismayed; and muttered under her breath, "What next?"

The baby Léocadie lay heavy and fragrant with sleep upon her knees; about her in the late summer evening cavorted her son Wally, with clumsy puppy antics directed to the pleasing of his parent and the postponement till the last possible instant of the evil approach of bed. Near by, like some dark and patient fate, awaited the negress Angélique to take her children from her; even her servants, thought Emily rather wildly, had become souvenirs of things which were past—Angélique, inherited from Pilar de Maytie, who could have been her friend; Anatole from Wally who was her friend. She motioned Angélique to take the children: for the moment she had had enough of children.

What was to keep her now? Emily asked herself rather strangely. What was to prevent her, for example, from going straight down over the hill to the gypsy camp yonder, and the violin that was calling, calling, into the dusk?

Had Esteban been within reach she would have run to him for protection from this queer mood, would have flung herself into his arms and clung to him without a word; and whether he understood her or not, he would have taken her, held her close—he always understood how to do that: kissed her until she forgot everything but him, and gave him back kiss for kiss, ardor for ardor. Yes, Esteban always understood how to do that!

But he was not within reach. For the first time, almost the first hour since he came to her in Miss Dibbs's little garden by the sea, Esteban was not within reach. He had taken his young brother Ignacio away to be alone with men awhile, which was good for him; and he had left his young wife to be alone with herself—which was not good for her. She felt as if she had been released suddenly from some spell, some curious high enchantment, and was free; lonesomely, dangerously free. She was Emily Weldon once more, no longer Esteban Urruty's wife, his woman, mother of his young. The knowledge excited her.

"But what do I want to do with Emily Weldon?" she asked herself under her breath. The sole answer was the calling of the violin from the gypsy camp.

Bette was listening to it also, leaning against the door beside her; a slim, serious young girl in her awkward teens, who managed always to be as near to her beloved sister-in-law as possible.

"I ask myself," said Bette presently, "why Monsieur Etcheverray permits the Bouhameshak to occupy his meadow, *belle-sœur*, and does not drive them away, like other people?"

Emily replied absently, "Etcheverray always permits everyone anything. But he is probably especially good to gypsies because the woman he loved once loved a gypsy. That would be like him."

Bette nodded. "Monsieur Tubal," she murmured romantically, "is my ideal of the perfect lover! He

never forgets. But Anna-Damasa says it is dangerous to be kind to such as gypsies; they take advantage. Anna-Damasa says," she went on, lowering her voice, "that once, long since, one of her own family was too kind to a gypsy, a woman gypsy; and that is why our hair is always so very black, like the Bouhameshak, and why when the spring breaks our feet must always itch for the road away."

Emily chuckled at this hint of a closet skeleton in the chaste records of her husband's family; although any Urruty skeleton would doubtless have been haled at once into church and made an honest woman of.

"Do even your sober little feet itch for 'the road away' sometimes, my Bette?" she asked idly; and was surprised at the intensity with which the girl answered: "Ah, but yes, *belle-sœur!* so that when I hear Matteo's fiddle I must stuff my ears with the fingers to keep from disobeying *la madre* and going there!"

Emily turned to stare at her little sister-in-law. "What—you know his name?"

"But certainly, all children hereabouts know Matteo; he plays for us to dance, and brings us gifts from over the mountain. Me he brought once a locket of sandalwood, all carved, from Africa; for which my father gave him money in return, and made him very angry. He is a handsome old man with long gray curls, and gold hoops in his ears, and a laugh big and gay and sudden, like Esteban's. But he smells too much of garlic if one goes near."

"That is fortunate!" murmured Emily; relieved to learn the age of this wandering Merlin. "Why should you want to go near them, darling? They are a dirty folk."

"Because of the music," explained Betty dreamily; music was a passion with the girl. "It makes me remember—things I have not known; like wind in the rigging of a ship; or sleeping amid dry leaves *à la belle étoile!* or—or being loved with the eyes, as Steban loves you, *belle-sœur,* when he thinks nobody sees—"

What ho, we are growing up! thought Emily, and drew the girl close to kiss her cheek.

Bette always received a kiss from this source as if it were a sacrament, solemnly and gratefully, touching the kissed place afterward with reverent finger tips to make sure the treasure was still there.

"Some day some man is going to love you quite terribly, you dear little girl," said the older one, with a sigh.

Bette nodded sedate acquiescence. "I hope they will find me a handsome husband," she confided. "But the music makes you also remember things, *belle-sœur;* that sees itself. What things?"

What things, indeed? Emily in her queer state of coming-to out of the trance of the present, found herself classifying them: A café, somewhere near water, where the Hungarian orchestra was playing *czardas* that drove one a little mad; two alone on a dark terrace outside; not Esteban, of course. Who was it? Oh, yes; the Egyptian, Prince Abdul, who

was half Turk. . . . Another little *boîte de nuit* in Paris, not a very discreet one, where she had gone to dance once with the English husband of a school friend, who suddenly wanted her to bolt with him. Odd how often Englishmen wanted you to bolt with them—and people called them cold! But he was hard to resist; any man was hard to resist, with music like that. She had kept on dancing, dancing, not daring to stop, till the moment passed and she could laugh at him. . . . Again it was the open-air restaurant at Monte Carlo, where the first violin of the orchestra had apparently fallen in love with her; kept coming nearer and nearer to their table to plead eloquently with his fiddle, till all the other tables were laughing, and the man who was giving the party had got angry, and tipped the fellow brutally to go away. But Emily was sorry and rather touched; and as they passed the silent orchestra she had slipped the flowers she was wearing into the first violin's hand, and looked back to see him thrusting them passionately into his blouse over his heart.

She was startled to realize that she had been uttering these not too creditable reminiscences aloud, to the wide-eyed fascination of young Bette, who inquired innocently, "Were all the gentlemen you remember in love with you?"

Emily laughed, not without embarrassment. "Otherwise I should not remember them, probably! I am afraid I made them be, darling. It was a sort of game I played—everyone plays it more or less, out there."

Bette nodded comprehendingly. "As at the casinos one plays *rouge-et-noir,*" she commented.

But it had been a better game than *rouge-et-noir,* thought Emily; more at stake than mere money; all the cards on the table, Emily Weldon with the world as *croupier;* wits, instinct, and a sort of watchful recklessness, to be played against the invincible determination of all mankind to get something for nothing. There had been more thrill to it than one found in the casinos; there had been adventure, danger, all the freedom of the Romany trail, the tilt carts. . . . And here she was hobbled, staked as they stake a horse upon the grass, to keep him from nibbling more than his share of succulence! She hated herself for the disloyal thought; but it persisted.

She went suddenly into the *salha* and lighted candles on either side of a tall mirror that hung there. The Emily who looked back at her from its dim depths was rather a surprise; a pleasant surprise. Matrimony was becoming to her, certainly; the figure had taken on softer, more gracious contours—that *fausse maigre* so much preferred on the Continent to the angular boyish lines which prevail elsewhere. The pallor of the skin had a new bloom; there was a poignancy of expression about lips and eyes, that unmistakable look of the woman who has been deeply loved. Even into her clear voice, always one of her charms, had come deeper, richer tones which the wise recognize as cradle notes, but which the unwise find peculiarly seductive.

Emily was accustomed to take stock of herself at

times, candidly and critically—herself having been for so long her only possession. Now she remarked to her reflection in the mirror, "I must say you do seem rather wasted on a hill village, my good girl!"

It was a propitious moment for the Count des Luynes to arrive, and he did so. He did so, in fact, as frequently as possible, having been left during Esteban's absence as a sort of special *chargé d'affaires;* and she turned to him with a sigh of relief.

"*A la bonne heure,* Tubal!" she said. "I am boring myself to death. I think I shall run away."

He smiled his absent, courteous smile, and made a little bow of acquiescence. "But perfectly," he replied. "Why not? When do we go?"

She laughed. "Not quite so fast, my friend! I fully intend to desert home and children and behave myself as badly as possible for at least a fortnight, but not in your company. You have a reputation to sustain, if only for fidelity. Esteban will doubtless choke me with fists on his return: cave-man stuff. But you he must not kill, you are too valuable to letters. No, I shall elope alone; and alone I shall return, a sadder but wiser woman, let us hope; and—nobody'd better ask me any questions about it, or I'll tell them the truth!"

"Desperate woman," he murmured, politely. "Unfortunately I have been instructed not to let you out of my sight during the absence of my friend Esteban, who doubtless foresaw some such contingency. But do not alarm yourself, *chère madame;* I also have my moments of ennui in high places. Let us

by all means go and encourage our lower natures at the cafés and bathing beaches of fashion."

The Comte des Luynes was always a comfort to her, the only person in that vicinity who understood her language without fail. He made, as he stood before her, in his shabby well-cut garments of yesteryear, touched off oddly by the native *béret* and white canvas *espadrilles*, rather an attractive figure of a man, despite the scant gray hair at his temples and the quizzical, remote little smile on his lips, the smile of one who has seen too much life to take much personal interest in it.

"I wonder," said Emily in the mood of devastating frankness which was upon her, "how Pilar de Maytie ever managed to resist you, Etcheverray? You are so distinguished and so beautifully casual. Probably I shall flirt with you desperately before we are done—take warning!"

"I shall be most flattered," he replied, with his amused little bow; but Emily was suddenly ashamed of herself, and held out her hand, in friendly fashion.

"Forgive my idiocy! I don't know what's the matter with me tonight; I feel dangerous somehow, dangerous to myself. Probably because I haven't heard from Esteban for a week, except a telegram saying '*Je t'aime*'—as if I didn't know that already! —and another saying he was quite well. My husband is no letter writer. Do you really think he will regard your presence on this expedition as an addition to the proprieties?"

Des Luynes shrugged. "I am not so lacking in conceit! But it happens that I have relatives on the seaboard whom I must visit occasionally because I hope to inherit their property; and when a lady of degree takes the road, is she not usually accompanied by some sort of equerry? Also ladies in waiting, of course. With myself, and Anatole the chauffeur, and your maid Angélique, and possibly the excellent Miss Dibbs—"

"Good Heavens, it's a *sortie* I'm planning, not a campaign! I had not intended to deploy the artillery. Miss Dibbs has gone to England—fortunately. Somehow I do not see dear Dibby in this picture. And Angélique will be needed here with the baby people."

"There remain," said the count imperturbably, "only Anatole and myself then; with possibly Bette for *dame de compagnie?* Bette, I fancy, would be sufficient duenna for even the most desperate of ennuied ladies."

Emily had to laugh. "She would indeed! A combination of Esteban in starched petticoats, and *la madre* with a telescope. Nothing would escape that large and candid gaze! Not that I was thinking of taking her. But—why not? Do you think we might really go down to Biarritz, she and I, and amuse ourselves for a little, while we wait for Esteban's return?"

"Could anything be more propitious!—under the eye, too, of your delightful stepmother?" murmured Etcheverray.

"You really find Suzanne delightful?"

The count made his courteous little inclination. "I find all women delightful, when they wish to be. Madame Duval always wishes to be"—which was not an inept description of the former Mrs. Blodgett-Weldon.

A letter had arrived from Suzanne only that morning; which may have had its share in Emily's sudden attack of nostalgia. Not for the things of Suzanne, surely; only for the things to which her stepmother served as reminder. The present Madame Duval had settled down as completely as was possible for one of her balloonlike tendencies; having, she wrote, completely lost control of her figure.

"Really, darling, the table here is almost *too* good —all the subtleties of a French cuisine, combined with ocean's best, and the rich, high flavoring of Spain," she lyrically expressed it; so that Emily was able to picture her stepmother a dirigible at rest, but tugging gently at its moorings to the passing breeze.

"My darling child: (Suzanne speaking)

"Not that you act very much like a child to me, I must say, considering that we are only a day or so apart by automobile! However, no hard feelings. Live and let live and don't ask questions, is my motto. Still it is about time for the honeymoon to be over, now. I may not be as clever as you, precious, but honeymoons are a thing I do know something about! I hear you are looking lovelier than ever, *tout au fait formidable*, some Frenchman

told us who had seen you recently. I hear also that your dashing Basque has dashed off somewhere with a lot of men in his yacht—really, I wouldn't encourage him too much in that sort of thing; they get out of hand so easily. But meanwhile here I am, ready; your own—or at least your only—mother; and one of our best suites happens to be vacant at the time. I promised your father that I would always do my best by you"—Emily felt a twinge of compunction over this; Suzanne had always done her best by her, such as it was—"and Armand would be glad to let you have the suite at very special rates—not that money is any object with you now, I suppose? However, Armand wishes to show his friendliness in some way; he always felt that you misunderstood him, somehow, that you did not really care for him very much; when all the while, there in London, he could have warned you not to be too hasty about Sir Harry, because there was a chance to get young Urruty back after all. But you wouldn't listen, so that was that. Anyway, it's all over now—Sir Harry has married an actress—quite a horrid sort of person; and I really do think for your father's sake you ought to come and see how well my new marriage is turning out. Duval isn't faithful, of course; that would be too much to expect of a Frenchman in his position. But he tells me all; and we are so congenial in every way—absolutely soul mates! —and really the table is too wonderful. By the way, the Principessa Trastavare is here—you remember that smart Milanese who made such a fuss over your

papa? Not at our hotel—I never can understand why during the foreign season so many of the best people seem to prefer that dismal old place up on the hill, all salons and no bathrooms, practically. But she's brought an airplane—flying is very much done now—and her husband is the famous ace, you know, and she has, of course, her usual following of young men. She says she used to know your Esteban *very well indeed*. But I never believe these professional beauties myself; they always seem to have known everybody's men very well indeed; and really I don't see how they could have had the time, do you? So don't be jealous, darling, but come along and take away one of her young aviators, and you'll be quits.

"My regards to that terrible old woman who asked such searching questions at your wedding. My word, what emeralds she had!

"Ever your loving and forgiving,

"Suzanne."

It was like a voice, not from the tomb, but from some previous aeon of existence; and Emily more than suspected that she ought to reply to it: "Get thee behind me." But, instead, she told Madame Urruty that she was thinking of paying her stepmother a visit during Esteban's absence, and that she would like to take Bette with her. Their neighbor Etcheverray, she added, thought of accompanying them.

The matriarch nodded careless approval; her re-

actions always held for Emily intriguing possibilities of surprise. "A most sensible arrangement," she commented. "Our poor Tubal is excellent company, once he emerges from his books; and to travel without a man is inconvenient. Bette," she continued thoughtfully, "is, of course, far too young to be seen anywhere without her mother, but having the sort of mother with which my son has chosen to provide her, she may as well begin to accompany you into the world. You will take her," she added, eying the young girl more critically, "to a good corsetière in Biarritz, if you please. It is time the child was making a figure."

"Figures," murmured Emily, "are not worn any more, *madre*."

"With us," commented the matriarch calmly, "it will always be desirable to know which is the *devant* and which the *derrière*."

Bette, having spent two winters at a convent boarding school, had ceased to look like an illustration by Boutet de Monvel and was growing tall: a straight young thing, with two long straight braids of hair down her back, who did not quite know as yet what to do with her arms and her feet, but at whose eyes people invariably looked a second time in passing. She had not beauty; she had more: a quietly compelling force, a quaint intelligence that proved her descendant and worthy successor of the matriarch herself.

"You think," added Madame Urruty questioningly, "that Esteban will permit you to visit a so-

worldly resort as Biarritz without him, my daughter?"

Emily's small proud head lifted a trifle. American wives, she said, hardly found it necessary to ask their husbands' permission about such things.

"But," Madame Urruty reminded her, "you are not an American wife; you have married a Basque. I think it probable Esteban will disapprove. However," she shrugged, "it is not my affair."

Emily leaned to kiss her cheek; one of the small affectionate gestures Madame Urruty never encouraged in her, but manifestly enjoyed. "Anything that concerns me is your affair, *madre*, if you will let it be. My husband must not forbid me things; but you may, if you wish?"

The old woman's eyes softened. She delivered herself of one of her oracles: "When a young horse begins to be restive in the paddock, I give him the run of the pastures. Otherwise, he may do himself an injury by attempting to jump the bars."

Emily laughed, and kissed her again. "Even if the horse is a mare, *madre?* I wonder if you ever attempted to jump any bars yourself!"

Madame Urruty replied sedately, "A cart horse does not make a good hunter; but it is conceivable that a hunter may learn to pull a cart."

These equine similes recalled to Emily an episode in her own childhood, when she had gone with her father to a hunt meet somewhere, driving a rented cob; the Weldon purse never quite ran to horses of their own. At the first sound of the horn, their

steed, evidently reverting to type, made off after the hounds himself most unexpectedly, galloping across field and gully regardless of impedimenta, with Mr. Weldon sawing desperately at the lines and adjuring his child between grunts to remember her Kentucky heritage and remain perfectly calm. At the first hedge, horse and equipage parted company, the Weldons remaining perfectly calm amid the wreckage; while the cob was later reported in at the death, still going strong. Emily envisaged this episode with a reminiscent sympathy for the absent-minded beast; somewhere in the distance had sounded for her the old familiar winding of the fox horn.

Suzanne's welcome was touched with a pleasure so genuine that Emily was ashamed not to be able quite to reciprocate. "To think," she said, slightly sniffling, "that it is months, if not years, since I have seen you!—and my darling child grown into an elegant young matron, with a string of pearls which will make all the women here simply green with envy. People won't believe they're real—although there always was a sort of genuine look about you, darling. You always could wear strass and make other people's diamonds look cheap. Such a gift! . . . And why, pray, this Count des Luynes? But you needn't answer, of course you needn't answer! I hope, darling, that your Suzanne is the sort of person whom you *never* need answer!—unless you want to. So wise of you not to bring the babies. Much as I yearn to see them—I have simply a passion for other people's babies!—I always do feel that the

place for growing children is in the nursery, out of sight. And the girl is quite enough. You are sure you won't find a plain little *jeune fille* sister-in-law —Basque at that!—rather cramping to the style?"

"I never seemed to cramp your style particularly, dear Suzanne," smiled Emily.

"No—though I must say you did your best. But then you were never really a *jeune fille*, you know."

"Fie, fie! what are you hinting about me?"

"Oh, nothing scandalous, of course! . . . But I must say you and your little playmates used to make me feel at times quite prudish and Queen Victorian by contrast."

"So bad as that? According to the latest biographers, however, even Queen Victoria had her moments—"

Emily spoke absently, her eyes busy with the pretty curve of beach which would always be for her the place where she and Esteban had found each other. It wore a different look from any she had known before; no longer blessedly deserted, as in the days of their idyl, nor yet crowded with fair-haired children and tall blond women and men, as during the English season, all burned to a healthy rosiness, all frankly attired for the sport of swimming. Now the feminine bathers went shrouded to the very edge of the tide to divest themselves, with many shrinking coquetries, of elaborate capes left fluttering on racks, while they hurried to conceal their persons in the enveloping deep. Dark young men, hastening to remove pyjamas from fine bronze torsos

uncovered except for a few inches of trousering and a strap across one shoulder, did not venture into the sea from the same place as the ladies; modesty forbade! . . . But once entered, the commingling of sexes in the Bay of Biscay seemed to be quite general.

The promenade was seething with observers, who strolled as only Europeans know how to stroll: graceful ladies in lace, with lifted parasols; a group of shy-eyed Spanish señoritas with a duenna in close attendance; a *chic* old Frenchwoman promenading for the health, with a devoted young cavalier beside her and a footman following with rug and pillows; victorias containing fat, olive-tinted matrons, with high-stepping horses and jangling harness and men in livery—for Spaniards will never quite abandon the elegance of the carriage for the vulgarity of the automobile. Men passed and repassed, ogling, commenting, blowing their cigarette smoke into faces which did not interest them, smiling into faces which did, using their Continental privilege of bowing first to ladies of their acquaintance, pausing to compliment and kiss hands.

Everywhere music blared and tinkled; tables spilled out from the crowded sidewalk cafés on to the street itself, for the serving of orange pilée and spumoni; the little shops in the vicinity of the great beach hotels were like so many jewel boxes for the display of tempting millinery and *bijouterie* and perfumes. While she watched, Emily saw an enterprising merchant, swimming beside it, launch out among

the disporting mermaids and mermen a flower-laden raft, with whose wares they were soon expensively pelting each other.

Distinctly this was not the English season at Biarritz, but the Continental one, when sun and summer being at their height, a heat-loving world seizes the occasion to make the most of both.

Overhead, soaring and swooping out over the bay like a gigantic sea gull—or possibly like a great white bird of prey—an airplane added its note of modernity to the scene.

"Humph! That's the *Oie Blanche*, with the Principessa driving it—advertising her wares as usual!" commented Suzanne, with unusual acidity. As a rule she was rather lenient toward other women, practicing her motto of "Live and let live, and ask no questions."

Emily chuckled suddenly over the name of the airplane; a "white goose" being, to French-speaking people, the symbol of all that is innocently simple. The irony of it pleased her. As she recalled the Principessa de Trastavare, the *oie blanche* had no place whatever in her environment.

"How do you mean—advertising her wares, dear Suzanne?" she idly inquired. "If I remember, they never needed advertising."

"She sells them, you know—airplanes, I mean! Or rather the Principe does; but everybody says she really has the business head of the firm. They've gone through most of their money, it seems; and no wonder, the way they carry on!"

Emily was interested. Here was something very up to date in the way of noblewomen; the descendant of a great Milanese house, married to a Siennese of equal rank, who had both won high honors during the war—and going into business now, like everybody else! At least, she thought with a certain relief, they are not selling hats and lingerie. Secretly, in her maiden thoughts, Emily had been wont to regard Giulia de Trastavare as a sort of heroine to model herself upon: an erratic, fascinating creature, beautiful in her dark and haggard way as one of Leonardo da Vinci's oddly diabolic Saints; utterly lawless; more than a little unbalanced, some thought—there is much insanity among old Milanese families. She represented at its acme the sort of life which had been at one time Emily's own ambition; for Donna Giulia was, as Emily's father had once remarked, despite her eccentricities and odd immoralities and even odder fidelities, a very great lady. She never lied, she made no pretense at virtues she had not got—nor, indeed, at anything; she gave as generously as she took—but she always took what she wanted; a very aristocratic trait indeed, as Archibald Weldon was careful to intimate. Except perhaps in the case of her own husband. Him she had never got; which was, so people said, a source of some chagrin at the time to the irresistible Giulia.

Yet it had been a famous war marriage of Emily's young girlhood; romantic because of its very suitability, but also a *grande passion*—intense as only the Italian variety of *grande passion* can be intense. The

Prince, already cited for gallantry in the air, had demanded leave on the eve of a concerted advance to fly to the near-by hospital camp where his fiancée was serving with the Red Cross, and the marriage had taken place at once, he returning immediately to the front.

But with that one gesture, romance had apparently retired from the scene. His career as an ace continued; she also was cited for gallantry in service; the men in the wards adored her. Men continued to adore her, elsewhere; her amours became presently as frank and famous as her husband's indifference to them. There were rumors of a probable annulment of the marriage, which never transpired, however. The pair continued to go their way, spectacularly and indifferently; socially in great demand everywhere; together yet never together, companions in sports and presently in business ventures; courteous and friendly with each other, under the constant speculative surveillance of the public eye. A horrid existence, thought Emily, with a sudden sharp yearning for her own husband; she wondered why they did not end it, separate for good and all.

She encountered the Principessa the first evening at the casino, where she herself had gone to dance with Etcheverray. The Milanese recognized her at once, and took her hand in a strong, nervous clasp. Like many Italians of her class, she affected the English speech and manner.

"What, Archibald Weldon's little white camellia! —and still fragrant? It is good to see you again.

In fact, I came to *Pays Basque* for that purpose. Oh, yes, it is the truth; I always speak the truth. One has heard of you, my dear; one has been glad to hear that your wretch of a father—but what a charming old wretch it was!—never succeeded in making you what I think you are not. I told him he would not succeed; I said to him, 'There is something innately decent there, as with so many American women; something delicate, discriminating, which will not easily content itself with sham'—as we others must, who are more blasées. He did not understand, of course, the charming Archibald! He said with hauteur, 'Naturally, my daughter will not accept sham! I have brought her up most carefully; she inherits, I hope, no vulgar tastes!'—never knowing, poor dear, how vulgar he was himself."

"As I recall," said Emily dryly for the defense, "my father's taste was not always vulgar, Principessa?"

"You mean me?" said the other, smiling. "Ah, yes, we had our little flurry, old Archibald and I—how anxious the plump divorcée was whom he had engaged himself to marry! But he was a man of honor, in his way—he went through with it. And how naughty of you to have noticed, at that age!—But you are wrong, my dear: I am often vulgar. All women are, *au fond*, else how support the artificiality of our life?" She pressed Emily's hand. "Let us at least be friends, you and me, in memory of your father, who adored me—for a month. I could make you, too, adore me if I wished; but I

do not wish; I prefer that you shall like me. Presently I shall want you to do something for me, probably—I always want people to do things for me; but not yet. We shall be becoming to each other, shall we not?—you so blond and cool and detached, I so dark and haggard and violent. Let us become inseparable as two schoolgirls, and tell each other everything!"

"Well, to begin," smiled Emily, steeling herself against the other's somewhat practiced charm, "tell me what it is you want of me, Principessa?"

"Giulia to you—always Giulia! Mm-m-m—shall I tell? Or shall I leave your intelligent little pretty head to find me out, eh? That will be better. . . . So, there are babies," she said with the abrupt change of subject Emily was to find characteristic. "How delightful! Fat ones, I hope? Two of them already—and dozens of others yet to come?"

Emily uttered a rather startled disclaimer: "Hardly dozens, I think!"—and asked in turn whether her new friend was fond of babies. She did not seem the sort of woman to cherish maternal sentiments.

"Frankly, no. I detest infants, of the mewling and puking stage. They do not interest me until they develop minds instead of appetites; I find them disgusting, even. What I meant was, how delightful to have a man who wishes you to have children for him," she explained with some candor; and broke off as the Count des Luynes came across the room toward them with a young Russian, who had

no eyes for Emily at all but gazed at Donna Giulia as a hungry dog gazes at a bone. "That," said the latter in a casual undertone, "is my latest *flirt;* what do you think of him? Not bad, eh?—a fine, straight back, and good legs? If only he would not wear his hair *en brosse,* so like an impassioned Fascist! . . . The other is yours, I suppose? A charming fellow, Des Luynes; but rather staid for you, after Esteban Urruty. You see, I have known them both!"

Emily was helplessly laughing as Des Luynes took her out on the floor. "For once I am glad you are you, and not Esteban, dear Tubal!" she said. "What my husband is going to think of my new friend, Giulia, gives me pause!"

Etcheverray was silent. There was a quality in his silence which caused her to look up at him, and to recall suddenly Suzanne's remark that the Principessa claimed Esteban as one of her old friends.

"Oho! Perhaps he thinks rather well of her already?" she murmured. "So *that* is what she wants of me! . . . Esteban!" Doubtless the Principessa, like her stepmother, had decided that it was time for the honeymoon to be over. Emily smiled, a confident, thoughtful little smile.

"You may as well tell me, Tubal: did Esteban really see much of her?"

He answered rather cautiously, "She has been coming to this coast for several years; and usually at the time of the haying."

"To meet Esteban? Well! Well! Much good

it seems to have done her!" cried Esteban's wife, with spirit.

Etcheverray looked relieved. "As you know, a man who is not yet ready to marry often safeguards himself by attentions to the wives of others."

Emily nodded. But not my man, she thought proudly, not my man! True, this was Europe, but Esteban was not entirely of Europe; he belonged to a people who live like children, simply and sturdily, with little need of priests or even of conventions to remind them of their principles. Had Esteban misbehaved himself—or, for that matter, Esteban's father, or his grandfather—undoubtedly old Léocadie would have punished them, and sent them off to bed without their supper. . . . Emily remembered irrelevantly, not without comfort, that by this time the Principessa must be nearing forty.

If the look of Biarritz at what the English so naïvely call "the foreign season" was different from Emily's earlier experience, the taste of it was even more so. Her marriage with a European made her free of a society upon which she and her father had been wont to touch, without quite entering. She learned that there were people living along the Côte d'Argent—so called from the silver wreaths of spray which cast themselves continually along that shore—for whom hotels did not exist; nor tourists, nor even permanent expatriates: Basque families of a more worldly type than the Urruty; smart French people; Spanish grandees who were not, as she had believed, invariably proud and poor like the people of her

native Southern States, but whose jewels and equipages and establishments could have given a lesson in such details to Chicago millionaires; many Portuguese and Genoese merchant princes; a few Austrians, to whom the French were less inimical than might have been supposed; a sprinkling of those refugee Russians whose sprightly melancholy forms so large a part of all European society nowadays.

These people, who had their seasons for appearing and disappearing along the coast like migratory birds, all seemed to be on intimate and most cordial terms with her friend Etcheverray, whom they treated with a deference which pleased and surprised Emily very much. In what other purely pleasure-seeking circle of society, she wondered, would a shabby, absent-minded *littérateur* be accorded such evident appreciation?

Esteban, also, they apparently knew well, and for his sake made Emily one of them, admitting her without question to the discreet and none the less lively gayety of the life in their secluded villas and summer palaces; while Suzanne from the background looked on rather wistfully but not grudgingly.

"Armand says it's quite wonderful, dear, the way you've ceased to be merely a pretty American and have become somebody!" she remarked once. "It's not entirely the Urruty money, either, for all these people have coal mines or sardine fisheries or something of the sort nowadays—and anyway money doesn't seem to count as much here somehow as it does at home, or in Paris. But your father was like

that, too—only the best was good enough for him, though Heaven knows he couldn't afford it! He could always make friends with a Prince as easily as with a tailor—even more easily!" She gave a reminiscent sigh. "I used to wonder how he did it?"

"There's something," commented his daughter quietly, "in having been born a gentleman, even if one doesn't quite keep it up."

Giulia de Trastavare made up for any incivility to the Duvals, however, by her attentions to their guest; attentions so marked as to be embarrassing. The Principessa sought Emily's company at all hours, and was constantly to be seen about the hotel, very much to Duval's gratification; a striking figure in her white flying costume of short Norfolk jacket puttees, and leg-of-mutton trousers, which she wore habitually, quite careless of public opinion.

She would make no engagements without her "adorable little Urruty"; she even gave up her flying temporarily because Emily, in response to an enthusiastic letter on the pleasures of Biarritz, had received from Esteban the laconic telegram: "Forbid you to enter airplane unless I am with you."

The Principessa laughed aloud over his marital rejoinder.

"Oho, there is a man who knows how to give an order! *E tutti quanti*—no more flying!"

Emily remarked that it was one thing to give an order, and another to have it obeyed. "This commanding husband of mine must learn his lesson! When will you take me up, Giulia?"

The other looked at her, gravely. "What, you would disobey him? Ah, my dear, I should not do that! Surely you would not wish to have a husband who could not command you? At any rate, expect no such naughty encouragement from me—I know better! So, then, the poor *Oie Blanche* remains for a while neglected in its hangar. But never fear, we shall manage to amuse ourselves quite well without flying, until this *exigeant* Esteban returns. Which, I fancy, will be soon," she added slyly. "Meanwhile my own husband arrives tonight—you remember Mario? No? But you will! Few women forget Mario. With him, and my impassioned Mikhail —who, between ourselves, begins to grow tiresome alone—we shall make a little *parti carré* upon whose hands the time does not hang too heavily. Unless, of course, you are committed with your dragon Etcheverray?"

Emily denied, laughing, that she was in any way committed with her dragon, Etcheverray; the sheer outrageousness of the older woman often reduced her to helpless laughter.

"That is well," said Giulia approvingly. "It is a romantic figure enough, with those haunted eyes, and the touch of gray in the hair above that bronzed and noble face. But—too noble for our purposes, *cara mia;* and too old!"

"Etcheverray," commented Emily, "will never care for another woman, I think. He has been in love since boyhood with Pilar de Maytie."

"Of course, a classic affair," recalled the other.

"But the devastating De Maytie is now dead, and you cannot tell me the man is a ghoul, to be in love with the dead? With those eyes? Ah, no!—he is now in love with you," she went on quite calmly. "That is evident to all; but since he is of so romantic a gesture, he will conquer this unworthy *tendresse* for his friend's wife."

"Stop, Giulia, do stop!" said Emily, for once only half amused. "Is nothing sacred to you? Tubal is an elder brother in our house, an uncle to the younger ones—our dearest friend, our neighbor! Can you imagine nothing in life except love and lovemaking?"

"What else is there in life?" shrugged the other, somberly.

There were times when the sardonic intensity of the woman frightened Emily, who was not readily frightened; there was more than a hint of diabolism in the subtle Da Vinci smile, despite its curious sweetness. One understood why she was called the most dangerous woman in Europe.

But she was as good as her word in the matter of the promised amusement; she had a restless genius for organization. There began a series of gayeties which transported Emily back into a recent past she had nearly forgotten, had been most willing to forget, so long as Esteban was at hand to fold her in the warm enveloping cloak of the present.

"We must make the most of our little white Emilie while we have her," the Principessa would adjure her followers. "For the doting husband soon

appears, and then—no more of her! The two will retire at once to their doves' eyrie in the Haute Pyr, whence nothing will emerge to us here below save the faint, continuous echo of cooing."

Emily laughed with the others at this graphic description of a domestic reunion; nevertheless her knees went weak and her heart pounded at the thought of Esteban's return. They would be off, indeed, to their doves' eyrie!—surely he must come soon? She had no intention of putting her simple peasant gentleman to the test of comparison with these overwise men and women, none of whom was fit to tie the laces of his *espadrilles.* But still he lingered.

The fortnight, packed as it was with movement and excitement and adventure, seemed the longest Emily could remember; neither dull nor unhappy, only long. Each night she went with relief up to her rooms, where drowsy Bette waked to play maid to her; that was to her the pleasantest moment of the day. There would be talk of the baby people at home, of news from the hacienda, and from Esteban—rare enough, the latter, for he corresponded with his wife chiefly by wire from whatever port he touched. Bette would tell her what progress she had made that day in swimming, and of how she was assisting Monsieur Tubal to arrange his notes for the new work—"It is astonishing how helpless are all men, *n'est-ce pas?*"—and of how she had made friends of some children on the beach, with their *bonne*— "But not such children as ours, *belle-*

sœur! Je pense que non! There are no such children as ours!" And Emily would ask with some compunction whether she was really enjoying herself.

"It is like heaven here!" Bette once replied solemnly—somewhat to the older girl's amusement, for it seemed to her that Biarritz was like almost anything else rather than heaven. "The smell of the sea, and the great rollers coming in all the way from your America, and everybody so gay, and at night always the dancing"—for Bette had her racial passion for the dance, and Emily saw to it that for an hour or two each evening the little girl did not lack for partners. "The gentlemen, your friends, are all so kind to me! I have had this week two boxes of chocolates to eat; and I shall keep the boxes to show them at home, lest they do not believe it!"

What a darling she was, thought Emily, kissing her good night; so serene, gentle, charming in her shy young dignity, no giggling and gushing as with other girls of her age; carrying about with her everywhere, even in this feverish, overscented atmosphere of the "foreign season" the simple fine air of the hills, the uplands, the *etcheonda.* . . . If I had not married Esteban for himself, she sometimes thought, I would have married him for Bette.

Prince Trastavare, for all his distinction, was a pleasant, simple-mannered Siennese, with singularly steady eyes, gray in a dark face; the alert look of an airman accustomed to constant danger. Emily recalled the famous ace as part of the background of her

girlhood—to do her justice, married men had usually been merely background to Emily; she did not as a rule poach on other women's preserves. But Trastavare began now to emerge as a definite if elusive personality. In his very elusiveness lay his charm. The Emily of other days might have found his indifference to women piquant, and set herself to overcome it: an indifference which masked itself under an air of extreme interest, of appreciative readiness to do whatever was expected of him. She was not fooled by it; but she found it rather comfortable, this *sainte indifférence;* which she recognized from experience with the Comte des Luynes, with the young son of Pilar de Maytie. It meant invariably an absorption in something else—Etcheverray in his past, his studies; "Jaun-Smeet" in his painting. She wondered what the absorption was in the case of Mario de Trastavare? His profession, perhaps? Now that there were for the moment no war laurels to win, he had a way of disappearing suddenly with his plane into far places, and returning with a new record for altitude, or endurance, or various feats of daring. Yet whatever his absorption was it seemed to give him little satisfaction. His eyes, when they were not smiling, had a baffled, puzzled look that made all women wish to comfort him. Many had tried, with slight success.

Emily was frequently attracted by aviators. They had a certain gallant appeal for her, such as the old Crusaders might have had—these knights of high

adventure, these solitary wayfarers of the sky; she rather suspected them of being supermen.

"As they too frequently are," replied her friend Des Luynes to this suggestion. "That is their misfortune. They become—how shall I say?—*lointain.* A perspective on life is good; but they get perhaps too much perspective. Men become to them, not as trees walking, but as ants crawling."

"And women?" asked Emily thoughtfully.

The other gave his little questioning shrug. "Women they regard, I dare say, as bombs bursting in air; which naturally they study to avoid. However," he smiled at her quizzically, "if you must have your little adventure in Esteban's absence, Trastavare is your affair. I resign in his favor. It is quite evident he does not regard you as a bursting bomb!"

"He suspects, perhaps," laughed Emily, "that I am already a dud. I am, you know! But you won't betray me, Tubal?"

"*Jamais de la vie,*" replied her neighbor seriously. "We fellow duds must rally to the support of each other."

The Prince, as Etcheverray had intimated, was more than ready, not only to play the game, but to play it very nicely. He always said the right things, and looked them; he never made love to her except in public; he took no liberties, while restraining with apparent effort a desire to do so; he was, in other words, a perfect fourth for any *parti carré.* He not only danced the little sister willingly about—Emily

had discovered in him, as in other very brave men, a tender-heartedness that amounted almost to sentimentality—but he kept Emily herself quite romantically supplied with flowers; usually rosebuds of a waxen pinkish-yellow type, very fragrant, which Donna Giulia recognized with interest.

"What, the *Rose d'Or?* Then he *is* intrigued!" she cried, with every appearance of satisfaction. "You may count upon it, *cara mia!* He never sends the golden roses from his mother's greenhouses unless he is seriously *épris*. Mario is yours!" And she increased her efforts to throw the two together.

Emily found herself puzzled. Was it possible for any woman to become thus genuinely indifferent to her husband's attentions to another, if only for the sake of appearances? Had she no jealousy whatever? Or was this jealousy itself, camouflaging under good sportsmanship? She finally decided that her friend Giulia had her own reasons—possibly the Russian—for wishing to keep her husband in an uncritical humor by an offering-up of consolation prizes.

She accepted demurely, therefore, the Prince and his *Roses d'Or;* permitted him to isolate her frequently in corners where they sat looking raptly into each other's eyes and discussed the affairs of nations, and particularly the bringing-up of little boys; and by degrees came to a very pleasant understanding of each other.

"May I be permitted to say," he murmured one evening, glancing with approval at his golden rose-

buds worn in the bosom of a soft white gown, "that you are quite the prettiest pretty-lady, *cara signora*, I have ever been privileged to adore?"

"And pretty ladies, *caro signor*, mean about as much in your life as—that!" smiled Emily, snapping her fingers under his nose. He kissed them as in duty bound.

"Ah, you wrong me! If there must be women, let them by all means be pretty ones. And young, and blond, and—in love with their own husbands."

"Which saves you effort, Prince?"

He bowed. "Which saves one trouble, truly."

Trastavare having discovered from Bette, who took such things very seriously, the day of Emily's nativity, wished to celebrate it with a suitable party at one of their favorite seashore *pavillons*, where the *bouillabaisse* and the American jazz orchestra were equally famous that season. For the occasion she ordered a new dress from one of the little Paris shops along the *plage*, a wisp of gold-colored tulle over rose, to match the Prince's roses.

But she could not take the interest that such a costume deserved, because Esteban had forgotten her birthday. Not a word had come from him, neither letter, gift, nor even the usual laconic telegram in which he assured her that he was well and happy, and that he still loved her.

Bette, however, furnished enthusiasm for two. She was an especially invited guest at the Prince's party—her first—and for the occasion she had a white silk frock, with slippers made to match,

which she regarded almost worshipfully. But her own appearance was as nothing to her compared with that of Emily.

"You look," she said in solemn ecstasy, "like an angel just stepped out from a picture of heaven, wrapped in a little sunset cloud!"

"A very little sunset cloud, darling! And I doubt," murmured Emily, "whether any angel from heaven ever showed quite so much gold silk leg, or such a frank décolletage in the back. Really, there seems to be nothing left above where the waist line used to be, does there? Perhaps a string of pearls hanging down behind might help."

At that moment, the door burst open and in strode Esteban.

The tulle sunset cloud became a wreck, and over the floor rolled several thousand dollars' worth of pearls unloosed from their string by the ardor of his home-coming. Emily was almost frightened by it.

"Darling—darling, don't be so fierce!" she whispered, clinging to him. "Yes, I'm here, it's really me! Why shouldn't it be?"

"I could not stay longer, no matter what he said; I dared not!" muttered Esteban tensely. "Weeks I have been away from you, months gone forever out of our lives—"

"Three weeks and two days, to be exact," Emily corrected, laughing but tremulous. "What 'he'? Who dared to keep you away from me? Not Nacio?"

"Ah, no; Nacio has gone fishing in Scotland with my American friends; he has forgotten there ever

was a woman in the world! It was Tubal who wrote me that I must stay away, I must not be a spoil-sport; I must give you every opportunity to see the world again, your world. But three weeks is opportunity enough for anyone to see the world!"

"Too much opportunity, darling! What does he know about it, that foolish old bachelor?" she cried indignantly. "Promise me, promise me you will never leave me again!"

The voice of Bette was heard through the key-hole, discreetly reminding them that the hour grew late.

"What of it?" asked Emily dreamily; and suddenly remembered.

"My word, the Prince's dinner! Trastavare was giving me a birthday party tonight!"

"So Giulia wrote to me," murmured Esteban, his lips against hers. "I wished to arrive in time for it."

A queer little electric shock ran through her joy. "Giulia? She *wrote* to you?"

"Oh, yes, she often writes to me; women seem to have always so much time for letters," he said carelessly. And Emily had believed she knew his every act, his innermost thought! . . . "It is too late to dine with them tonight, however." His lips sought hers again, and found them; but the shock remained.

"You seem to have been carrying on quite a correspondence during your travels with everyone except me!" She tried to say it lightly.

His head hung, in a funny, boyish way he had when ashamed. "Do not scold me, *gatchutcha;* letters I cannot write! I can plow my field with the best, I can bring a boat through a squall; no horse has ever mastered me—but letters I cannot write. What does one find to say in letters?"

Emily took some comfort in the thought that his correspondence with the Principessa had probably taken the form of telegrams; but still the shock remained.

"Esteban"—she pushed him gently from her—"I suppose I shall have to ask you something, soon or late, and I may as well ask it now. Were you and Giulia . . . did you ever have an affair with the Principessa de Trastavare?"

"*Tchk!* She told you that?" He shook his head with annoyance. "It is strange how women like to boast of such things to one another!"

Emily gave a sigh of relief. "Then, she lied?"

He answered without hesitation, "But no, certainly not, my heart! Giulia never lies; she is a quite honest woman, which is one of the reasons men find her pleasing. Do you not find her so yourself? She wrote me that you did."

Emily adjured herself not to be a fool: these things were; men were only men, and Esteban like the rest; what of it? But she could not conceal the slight shudder with which she turned away from him. He followed anxiously.

"What have you, my heart? You are not vexed with me? Ah, surely not because Donna Giulia

sometimes writes to me! She was fond of me once, and she is grateful. I have had occasion to do her some little service, recently." He hesitated, and then added with evident reluctance: "She needed money, Emilie. Their affairs became involved; it was necessary to have capital in order to procure the agency for the aëroplanes. You see?"

Emily turned to him eagerly. So it was only money the woman wanted of him! "But you—you weren't really fond of her, darling?"

"Most certainly I was!" he said, with a surprised laugh. "I was deeply enamored, and also flattered! For a younger man, the companionship of a woman like that, one of the most charming in Europe—"

"Never mind, Esteban, I know exactly what you are going to say," she interrupted, wearily. "I have heard my father say that sort of thing, too: 'For a young man, the companionship of a woman like Giulia di Trastavare is a liberal education.' And so it is, my dear: too liberal."

Her husband frowned. "No, I was not going to say that, though your father was quite right. I did not in the least regard Donna Giulia as an education; nothing so dull. But how does this concern you, Emilie? It was before I knew you, naturally, before I was a married man."

"'*Eschaldene fededen*,'" she repeated bitterly. "Basque and faithful!"

"But," he cried with some impatience, "how could I be faithful to a woman I did not yet know?"

She said in a low voice, "You could at least have told me!"

His frown deepened. "Men do not boast of these things as women do. Come, come, *gatchutcha*, are you not making yourself just a little foolish?"

No woman of spirit likes to be told that she is making herself foolish, particularly if it is true; and they were on their way to a very promising quarrel—their first—when the voice of Bette was again heard anxiously at the door: "Three times Anatole has come to remind us that the car is ready, Steban; and now the Principe himself is on the wire, to ask why does not Emilie come to her feast-day party?"

"Tell Prince Trastavare that my wife is otherwise engaged," said Esteban shortly. "Explain to him that her husband has returned, and will require her company for this evening."

"Nonsense!" said Emily, flushing at a sudden memory of Giulia's merciless jibing about the turtle doves. "Tell him we shall all three be there as soon as possible, to apologize for our tardiness in person. . . . Certainly we shall, Esteban dear! We are out in the world, remember, no longer hibernating in our Garden of Eden. And poor little Bette must not be disappointed of her first party. Come, help me into another dress—this one is a hopeless loss—and then hurry into some evening clothes yourself, there's a dear! Besides," she added against her better judgment, "you will have a good opportunity to talk with your old friend Giulia."

"Quite true," he said imperturbably, "though that opportunity I should make in any case."

Suddenly he kissed her, and she returned the kiss, clutching at him. But it would have been better had they laughed together.

Not till he had gone to his own room did she discover the birthday gift he had left on her dressing table: an exquisite miniature of her two babies' heads, which he had brought to her from Paris.

Emily had been "out in the world" with her peasant-gentleman before, of course; their prolonged honeymoon had taken them together to many of her old haunts, where they met old friends, both hers and his; but always together, a complete entity of two, blissfully independent of people about them. Now for the first time she found herself looking at her husband critically, from the viewpoint of other women: from that of Giulia de Trastevare.

She found him quite the handsomest figure in a company of Continentals, whose men do not regard masculine physical beauty as a thing to be deprecated. He wore with distinction the becoming white evening dress of the tropics. The black *faja* sash, used in place of a waistcoat, outlined a waist as slender as that of a modern woman; he moved with the light unconscious grace of the athlete. There was something in the carriage of his sleek dark head, the cut of the arched nostril, the jutting nose, the long, strongly marked brows over eyes of liquid black fire, which must have thrilled her, beauty lover that she was, if she had never loved the man. Este-

ban's appearance quite put her into the shade; the men made as much fuss of him as the women.

"*Per Dio!*" she overheard an explosive Portuguese remark to the Comte des Luynes beside him, "but that is the most beautiful physique I have seen outside of galleries! What is the boy—a matador, a wrestler, a dancer?"

"All three," replied Etcheverray, "and sailor and *pelotari* as well. That is Urruty. We do not have many like him, even in our hills. It is a perfect throw-back to the Crô-Magnon," he went on absently, mounting his hobby; somewhat to the alarm of the Portuguese. "The Magdalenian Crô-Magnon, you know, the finest race type known to us, and unspoiled by mingling with lesser Iberian races. He is also my very close friend and neighbor, senhor."

"Ah, I congratulate you!" said the Portuguese sincerely; and Emily smiled, partly in pleasure, partly in amusement. She never accustomed herself to the artless enthusiasm of European men over each other's beauty.

Esteban accepted all this acclaim of welcome with the same sang-froid as he was accustomed to accept the cheering at the *pelota* court; making his slight grave bow here and there, offering his formal little compliments in return. He had in marked degree the racial characteristic of dignity. Emily blushed to recall that she had been a little afraid for him in the company of more worldly people. His manner with the Principessa was perfect, a pleasant combination of old acquaintance with new deference, as if

his own married state caused him to regard all wives with especial respect. She was the only woman present whose hand he kissed, however, lightly and casually as Des Luynes himself; and during dinner they talked together almost exclusively, to the glowering jealousy of the Russian on the other side of Giulia.

Afterward, the Principessa came over to Emily and embraced her with enthusiasm. "But how delicious he is, our Esteban! I had forgotten. And you have taught him much, you clever one! You have taught him at last how to talk to a woman, how to say the things she likes best to hear."

"Have I?" smiled Emily, with dry lips. "I think you must have taught him some of that yourself, dear Giulia!"

"Ah, never! I teach them nothing; it is they who teach me. And with me Esteban was always silent, serious, a man of action rather than of words. But of course you know that!" Yes, Emily knew that. She was careful not to wince over it. "I find myself even more intrigued with him than before," went on the Principessa, candidly. "He quite stirs me. Now we shall be a *parti carré* indeed! You with Mario, who begins to adore you—did I not see him pressing your foot during dinner?" (She had not.) "And I with Esteban—could there be anything more congenial!"

"But," demurred Emily, bearing up gallantly, "what shall you do with Mikhail, Giulia? He will certainly put poison in your tea if you drop him for Esteban."

"Pooh, that one!" The Principessa dismissed her former *flirt* with a careless wave. "He must go away now. He grows tiresome. But have you ever seen anything more positively moving than the dark, clear smoothness of Esteban's cheek when a blush of color stirs beneath it?"

Emily confessed with sincerity that she never had.

There began a curious little interplay and byplay of personalities, in which Emily, according to her nature, seemed to be both audience and participant. She and Esteban were rarely apart, yet rarely together; always other people interwove themselves into the pattern of their days, more or less welcomely; for though she loved her husband more intensely, and perhaps more consciously, than she had ever done, some strange new perversity made it impossible for her to let him know it. Something had come between them, intangible and persistent as the filaments of a cobweb. Both were aware of it. More than once she caught Esteban's glance resting on her, puzzled, troubled; and instead of running into his arms for reassurance, she would blow him an airy kiss, perhaps, or make a droll little *moue* at him, or turn to Prince Trastavare, usually at her side, and give him the lingering smile for which Esteban obviously waited.

Why she did these things Emily could not have told her own mother: she did not know. Was it jealousy? If so, it was an emotion new to her. Surely she could not wish to punish Esteban for

having yielded, nor even for yielding again, to a fascination of which she was perfectly aware herself!

For the Principessa continued to make herself as charming to Emily as to Esteban; seemed genuinely in want, even in need, of her affection. Often she would send away the men imperiously, to spend a day quite alone with her friend; and Emily, who had never known any woman intimate, found her the most amusing and stimulating of company, with whom no dissimulation of any sort was necessary, or possible. The two discussed everything—except their husbands—with a candor Emily had not before found possible save with the dying boy Wally, who had seemed slightly apart from the things of earth, living in a little world of his own; a lonely little world, until Emily had chosen deliberately to enter it. The thought occurred to her that Giulia de Trastavare, despite the people who inevitably gathered about her everywhere, was moving in a lonely little world of her own.

However, notwithstanding the genuine affection between the two women, the Milanese continued frankly and unmistakably to pay court to Emily's husband, who unmistakably did not object. He did not quite succumb, but he did not object. Emily felt that it was only a question of time before he must succumb. Watching covertly, she saw why they attracted each other, different as they were in type. They had a certain kinship of candor, of primitive ruthlessness, of tremendous vitality—hers a little restless and feverish now, his calm and steady

and vigorous as a sea wind. Both were oddly alive, sensuous to their finger tips; people, as Etcheverray had put it, who "acted clearly." She could not imagine either of them passive, patient. They were drawn to each other by pure mutual force of motion. Yet Emily did nothing to prevent.

Sometimes she looked strangely at the reflection in her mirror, wondering, "Can this be I?" And was it really Esteban, her lover, her husband, who was slipping away before her eyes into the subtle toils of another woman?

She would have liked to discuss it with Etcheverray, ask advice of the neighbor who had forwarded their marriage. But it seemed not quite loyal to discuss her husband's failings, even with his friend; and the remote, absent-minded scholar who had made such a fiasco of his own affairs was hardly the person perhaps to give practical counsel about hers. She even thought in her desperation of consulting Bette, the serious little child-woman who looked out at life so wisely and clearly from the sanctuary of her young innocence. But that was, of course, impossible.

Often she would have begged Esteban, had she dared, to take her back to the safety of the *etcheonda*, to her babies and *la madre*, and shy, quizzical Pedro, who knew men, as he knew animals, from living very close to them. But she could not run from a field of battle. No! If she was to keep Esteban now, she must fight for him; not hide him, like some

secret treasure, away from envious eyes. And so she began in earnest to fight in the only way she knew.

Prince Trastavare made a good ally, being accustomed to court danger for its own sake. The revised *parti carré* disintegrated into a good many *solitudes à deux*, Emily permitting the Prince to take her up in the *Oie Blanche* frequently, despite a stern protest from her husband.

"Since when have you become timid, Esteban?" she rallied him. "Could there be anything safer, even from Mrs. Grundy's standpoint, than flying about *en plein air* with one of the world's most famous aces?" And, indeed, the airplane might be regarded as a complete chaperon in itself, she pointed out, what with the relative position of navigator and passenger, and the difficulty of conducting any subtle dalliance through the medium of a speaking tube.

"I do not know Madame Grundy, and her point of view does not interest me," said Esteban bluntly. "What I am considering is your neck, Emilie! Remember that you are the mother of two children."

"Oh! It is for their sake you have become so solicitous, my dear? Mothers of children can be plucked off every bush, for that matter. . . . But do not worry: Trastavare is interested in my neck also, I believe, for more personal reasons; to say nothing of his own." It was to Esteban, her lover, her husband, that she talked like this, and could not help herself!

One comfort about these rather terrifying little excursions into the ether—for she had never cared for

flying—was that at least Esteban could not be making them with Giulia; the Trastavari having brought only one of their planes to Biarritz.

What became of the other pair while she and the Prince thus disported themselves in high seclusion, she often wondered; careless questioning resulted only in the information that Esteban spent too much time at the casino.

"Our grandmother will be angry with Steban if he loses money at the *rouge-et-noir*," said young Bette anxiously. "It was the cards which stole away the property of Monsieur Tubal. Can you not warn him of this?"

"I? I might as well warn the *tramontana*"—which happened that day to be blowing—"that it is in danger of upsetting the bay! Donna Giulia, you see, is also very fond of cards," she added, lightly enough.

She had not quite won as yet to the pleasant, indifferent friendliness which marked the marital relations of the Trastavari, though she was learning fast. She happened to overhear a passing conversation between the two one day, from a terrace on which her window opened.

"Ah, Giulia, my dear! You are enjoying your holiday, as usual?"

"Oh, yes, thanks, very much as usual. And you, I hope, Mario? But I begin to *raser* myself a little with the Russian. He is so tiresomely jealous."

"Youth," said the Prince succinctly. "He still takes himself seriously, no doubt. Perhaps you have

brought this jealousy on yourself, with too much encouragement?"

"Of him, you mean? Or of Esteban?"

"Of both, my dear. Driving tandem has its disadvantages."

There was a little laugh between them. "Perhaps you are right, Mario; thanks for the hint. Cannot you do something to rid me of Mikhail?"

"What would you have me do? Boot him—shoot him? Make at this late date the gesture of the enraged husband?"

"Oh, hardly anything so unnatural!" There was no perceptible edge to her voice. "But it takes one's pleasure away to have the fellow glowering and sulking about."

"Um-m! You have given him his *congé?*"

"Certainly, but the stupid will not take it. He means to see the thing through. Perhaps we might slip away ourselves? A little cruise, or something?"

The Prince was silent a moment, then he said quietly, "Ah! . . . I will see what can be done, if that is what you want?"

"Thanks! I shall do you a good turn myself one of these days. In fact," she added slyly, "I have already done you a good turn, have I not? The little Urruty . . . is she not exquisite?"

Emily had her scruples, such as they were: she moved hastily out of earshot. But her heart felt very sick and heavy. Was their marriage, hers and Esteban's, to come to such an ugly impasse as this?

The next day her husband remarked to her calmly

that he was rather tired of Biarritz, and thought of inviting some of their friends to make a little cruise along the coast into the Mediterranean. "Trastavare complains that the flying here is bad because of the Biscay winds; and since you have become so devoted to the sport, one may as well seek favorable conditions. They have quite an airdrome, you know, on the Côte d'Azur."

"Whom shall you take beside the Prince and Giulia?" she asked with equal calm. It had evidently not occurred to him to consult her wishes.

Only a few besides themselves, he told her, another couple or two for cards, and Bette, of course, and Tubal—"Etcheverray wishes to revisit his friend the Neanderthal man in the museum at Nice, also to pursue some investigations at the School of Oceanography at Monaco."

Emily raised a surprised eyebrow. She had associated Monaco entirely with Monte Carlo and the gaming tables.

"Which are the more important, naturally," agreed Esteban, "and will be a relief after the game here—one might as well be playing *muss* or *la manille* at Lastra's cobbler shop!" Also Bette, he added, was anticipating with great excitement her first experience of yachting.

Emily smiled faintly; it was not like Esteban to give so many reasons for anything he wished to do. "Giulia's Russian does not go with us, I imagine?" she said.

"No," replied Esteban simply. "I dislike Russians. They talk too much."

The Principessa had evidently gained her point: the *parti carré* was to continue, uninterrupted by any previous claims.

Emily made one slight protest. "I had thought it about time to be going home, perhaps, back to the babies. You think your grandmother does not need you?"

The babies and his grandmother would have to do without them a while longer, he replied. While they were out and about, with the yacht already in commission, they might as well enjoy themselves to their fill.

Emily had an inhospitable feeling about the *Gathid*. Much as she enjoyed inviting people to the hacienda, so that in motoring weather very few weeks passed without guests arriving to enjoy the unique experience of a visit there, she resented the thought of strangers aboard the *Gathid*, and was deeply hurt that Esteban did not resent it also. The boat was peculiarly their own, their ship of dreams during the year of their wanderings, their haven of refuge still when the everyday world pressed too close. She loved every gracious line and curve of the little vessel, the long, clean sweep of its deck, the shining brasses of bridge and engine room, the miniature salon fitted out in elaborate Spanish style, the staterooms with their brocaded walls and hangings and mirrored doors, all carefully arranged for her comfort while Esteban waited to take her away

from Miss Dibbs's house in Saint-Jean-de-Luz. The boat, which had been built for his order and under his personal direction, was a sailing vessel of the clipper type, with emergency auxiliary engines; small as yachts go, but remarkably seaworthy. Esteban, always his own captain, shared his pride in the *Gathid* with the Ciboure sailormen who formed her crew, and whom Emily had come to regard as personal friends.

But now she was to see her husband in still another light; no longer as able seaman, sharing the labors of the little vessel with his men, but as a gracious and evidently quite experienced host, using to the full his racial instinct of hospitality. Entirely without her assistance he had stocked the larder with the best the market afforded; the chef was an excellent one; the wines had been selected by an expert; there were even flowers growing in boxes along the deck railings, and bouquets provided for every woman's breakfast tray. Emily, accustomed as she was to luxury as supplied by other people, was not prepared by the Spartan simplicity of life at the hacienda for Esteban's own talents in this line. Evidently, she thought rather grimly, he intended to make an impression upon the Principessa.

But that lady was apparently well acquainted with the *Gathid* already. "My word, what improvements you have here!" she exclaimed as she stepped aboard. "This is no longer the manly sportsman's retreat I christened for you, but a veritable ladies' bower, Urruty! You should have renamed her the Turtle

Dove," she added, with a wicked little grin in Emily's direction.

"*You* christened her?" Emily could not conceal her surprise.

"But certainly! I even named her—the Cat, you see—for another woman, a pretty Basque of whom I was jealous at the time. And certainly I had cause! But she did not take you from me, after all, did she, my dear fellow? It was not for her you have made things so delightful here?"

"No," said Esteban simply, "it was not for her."

"It was for me, for *me!*" Emily wanted to shout aloud, but she restrained herself. Had it been, after all, for her? How many others might there be of whom the Principessa felt she had reason to be jealous? A ladies' bower indeed, for all she knew! The thought took away all her pleasure in their ship of dreams.

Suzanne had bidden her good-by with evident misgiving. "I do wish you were taking almost anybody else on this cruise except these Trastavares. I feel it in my bones something is going to come of it," she said maternally. "Of course I wanted you to give the woman a run for her money—that's what I got you here for: to settle a score or two on account of your poor, dear father. But really, precious, if you don't take care, people are going to talk about you and Prince Trastavare!"

"Dear me, I hope so," murmured Emily. "One may as well be dead as not be talked about."

"Humph! You say these smart-aleck things, but

I sometimes wonder whether you mean them?" remarked her stepmother, not without acumen. "Anyway, you'd better be careful, or Esteban will begin to act up," she advised; reverting, as do all people when really moved, to the language of her youth.

"Not he," said Emily ruefully. "I wish he would 'act up'!"

The older woman eyed her sharply. "So, that's the idea? Rousing his jealousy? Well, it is one way of holding them—for a while," she added thoughtfully. When Suzanne waxed thoughtful, Emily usually listened. "But if I were you, I'd let sleeping dogs lie. They aren't like our men, or like English, these Europeans. I ought to know, having married both kinds! They are older in their ways, somehow; they don't show their real feelings. But that doesn't mean they haven't got 'em—by no means! Take my Armand, for instance. He wouldn't knock me down, as Blodgett might have done, or snub me till I didn't know whether I was present or not, the way your father knew how to do; but if I were to get Armand really riled, dearie, he'd even up on me in some nasty little way you'd never suspect. They've got claws, as well as teeth, these European men; and they don't hesitate to use 'em!"

"I hope you are not insinuating that Esteban is a cat-man, like your Duval?" said Emily with some heat.

"Um-m! More like a tiger-man, perhaps. Look at the way he moves, sort of flowing and smooth, as if

he could leap up a tree as easily as not! I know I'd hate to have him give *me* a swipe of the paw!"

"Or a bite of the teeth, for that matter?" suggested Emily. "He's got such strong white teeth—'the better to eat you with, my dear!' "

"I'd know how to handle a biting man," replied Suzanne seriously, with confidence. "But take it from me, dearie: don't start anything with Esteban you can't finish, nor with Trastavare either! They're —different, that's all. My word! I like to see any woman having a good time, of course, and you were pretty badly swamped in domesticity; but I must say you've snapped out of it! You remind me of the monk in the poem—" And she quoted plaintively a limerick current at the moment about a monk in Siberia whose life grew drearier and drearier, till he burst from his cell with a hell of a yell and eloped with the mother superior.

Despite step-maternal misgivings, the little party on the *Gathid* made very pleasant sailing, leaving behind them the Côte d'Emeraude and the Côte d'Argent, passing Gibraltar and the high red cliffs of the Spanish Côte Vermeille, and so along the Mediterranean, to anchor presently in a blue, transparent bay of the Côte d'Azur, within easy distance of Nice and Monte Carlo; and also of the Villa Luna, where the Trastavari had what they called their selling field.

This was, as the Principessa carelessly explained, a shabby old barn of a place where the Trastavari usually spent their nesting periods, but which they

themselves had used very little; until it was discovered that the flat upland vineyards made a promising flying ground.

"It is lucky Mario did not sell the property for our debts, as I wished him to do—he makes many sales here during the season now, especially since the rich Argentines have taken possession of the Riviera. They are as bad as the Californians—they will buy anything that costs enough. For myself, life *en villegiatura* bores me; but I think Mario rather enjoys it, pottering about in the gardens, the rose houses, what not. It is from his mother's greenhouses here, by the way, that your golden rosebuds come," Giulia added, smiling companionably at Emily. "I assure you, Mario has never so honored *me* with his filial sentiments! We keep a majordomo here of sorts, and some gardeners, and the mechanics, of course, but we never open the villa itself; we find it easier and cheaper to stop with friends." It was the Principessa's extreme candor which Archibald Weldon had indicated to his child as a trait peculiarly aristocratic.

Anatole with the car was on hand to meet them, and there was a motor launch for ferrying purposes; so that life was resumed much as it had been at Biarritz; with the exception that while at Biarritz Emily had at least seen her husband frequently during the day; now she never saw him at all, except during dinner and afterward, when he was very busy with his guests; Esteban proved a tireless host.

The Principessa also absented herself during the

greater part of every day, which she spent trying out planes recently arrived at the hangars—"for the winter's trade," she informed them. She was apparently far more interested in aviation than was her husband, who continued to put himself very much at Emily's disposal; and Emily was grateful enough for his company, although she sensed in it lately an unspoken sympathy, almost a pity, which often made her wince.

She did not lack for other company; although their polite guests, suspecting a thriving affair, tactfully absented themselves as much as possible. Des Luynes was usually at hand, his manner more and more vague as his new book began to take shape. He was engaged at the moment in locating the whereabouts of the lost continent of Atlantis. And there was Bette.

That young person had adapted herself to the novelty of life aboard a yacht as if it were merely another household to manage, having taken upon herself without question the direction of the chef, the ordering of meals, the arrangement of flowers, and so on. She also gave some attention to the affairs of Etcheverray, rearranging his notes for greater convenience, cataloguing his references, giving some rather necessary attention to his appearance.

"I mock myself," she commented once to Emily, "of how men manage to make themselves always so uncomfortable, even in the mind, *n'est-ce pas?* With nothing in order—*Pfut!* How does one think?" She was seated cross-legged, sailor fashion,

upon a coil of rope, stitching away industriously upon a coat of Etcheverray's. "Regard this sleeve, ready at any moment to show the naked elbow! Yet Monsieur Tubal continues to wear it as proudly as if it had just come from the tailor. He has, in fact, no other, except the smoking. What a man!"

"Yet he seems quite sufficiently clothed at present," murmured Emily, glancing at the unconscious savant, busy with his papers near by.

"*Mais oui!* I have given him," explained Bette in a confidential whisper, "a coat of Esteban's, placing in the pockets his usual playthings: the pencil he likes to bite upon, the case of eyeglasses he forgets to use, the cigarettes he puts into his mouth without lighting. He is quite content, that one! He does not know the difference."

Bette had a way of humming, over her work, a tuneless, monotonous little lullaby which was typical of her; perhaps of all the Bettes in the world:

"Fais dodo, Colas, mon p'tit frère,
Fais dodo, t'auras du lolos.
Maman est en haut, qui fait du gâteau,
Papa est en bas, qui fait du chocolat—"

Of late, the little ditty sometimes brought tears to Emily's eyes. She would have fared badly just then without Bette to remind her of the eternal verities; little Bette who would most certainly bake cakes for her own babies, and see to it that their papa provided them suitably with the *lolos* of life, chocolate and otherwise.

Those who know the Riviera only in season miss much of its more intimate charm; for the Niçoises, like their Italian neighbors, are essentially sun lovers, and do not wake fully into life except during the summer solstice. September heat does not daunt them; then it is that the peasants make up in song what the birds lack; and there are dances and merry-making, Saints'-Day processions with fireworks, bicycle races, much family life in the open air, the intoxicating fragrance abroad everywhere of heliotrope in full bloom. At night, along the littoral, the towns glitter like bands of fireflies, and other fireflies by twos and threes twinkle up the dark slopes toward the high Corniche, where motors flash and pass continually on their way to pleasures beyond, and yet more pleasures.

Emily tried to savor her surroundings as a connoisseur of beauty should. If one has nothing else, there is always the pleasure of the eyes, was one of her earlier philosophies. But for once beauty failed her. Here was a feast for which she had no appetite. All her life, she thought, she would cringe at the memory of a turquoise sea with sapphire shadows in it, tinged by a golden twilight, jeweled with great stars. She had learned before, when she waited for Esteban, how loveliness without love could hurt. Now it seemed to her, incredibly, that there was no longer any Esteban for whom to wait.

She came to dread above all things the drone of an approaching airplane, a rakish craft, stream-lined and painted white, out of which the beautiful dark

face of the Principessa laughed down at them mockingly from close above, as the *Oie Blanche* swept roaring past. Sometimes she was alone; sometimes she had a companion, and, although difficult to recognize in the disguise of aviator's cap and goggles, Emily felt sure that it was Esteban. She never asked, however, nor did her husband volunteer information.

He seemed himself in the best of spirits, unusually solicitous for her pleasure, constantly suggesting plans for her amusement. But even Bette became aware that there was something amiss, and regarded her beloved *belle-sœur* with a certain defensive anxiety. She commented again upon Esteban's devotion to the card tables.

"I have written home about how Steban spends all his days away from us at the casinos," she said once, reassuringly, "and I think *la madre* will have something to say to that!"

"It was very officious of you, Bette," replied the other, quietly. "Your brother naturally comes and goes as he chooses. Besides, I do not think he spends all his time at the casinos."

"No? Then where?"

Emily shrugged. "That is hardly our affair, dear. You might ask him?"

She spoke in sarcasm, but Bette knew nothing of sarcasm; she nodded capably, and the next day reported in evident relief that her brother did not spend all his time at the casinos; on the contrary, he went to them quite rarely. She neglected to say,

however, where he did spend it. Perhaps Esteban himself had neglected to say.

One night at dinner—they were dining on deck, while a guitar and singers made music for them from the water below—the Principessa remarked that a new plane had arrived at the hangars, a monoplane of a type different from any she had seen.

"Ah, then I must soon leave you," said Trastavare regretfully to his hostess. "It is for that I have been waiting. I think I did not tell you, Giulia? They have designed me a special monoplane for the Australian flight. . . . Oh, no, I shall not fly direct to Australia," he answered somebody's question. "I shall make first a trial flight to Arabia, I think, across the Red Sea, and so on East. It has always been my ambition," he explained, "to visit the different continents by air."

Emily, who sat near the Principessa, heard a stifled exclamation from her. But she said aloud pleasantly, "That sounds interesting, Mario. Who accompanies you?"

He mentioned the name of an assistant. "Or perhaps I shall take young Miller of the American group as co-pilot. He is a keen flier."

"Why not me?" asked his wife lightly; but Emily noticed that her hands gripped the table edge until the knuckles showed white. "I am rather a keen flier myself, you know!"

"And a most able one," he said politely. "Quite as good as most men. But naturally for such an

expedition one prefers male company. There is a very slight element of danger."

"I am even," remarked the Principessa, still lightly, "not averse to the element of danger, Mario!"

"As one has observed," he smiled. "Unfortunately your mechanical skill is not on a par with your adventurous spirit. It is the one disability of your sex."

"So, I am rejected? And on a technicality!" she murmured, with a shrug. "Apparently the one requisite for a model wife nowadays is that she be a good mechanic. Remember this, my little Bette!"

That night, as Emily lay restless in the loneliness of her cabin—for the forward staterooms had been turned over to the ladies, while the men bunked aft in less luxury and greater liberty—her door opened and Giulia de Trastavare entered, without knocking.

"See here!" she said in a hoarse, harsh voice very different from her usual careless aplomb, "what does this mean? Mario goes off to Australia after all? You are sending him away? *Dio mío!*—do you think he will stop at Australia? He will go on, I tell you; on and on, indefinitely! You silly little fool! You have given him his *congé?*"

Emily, startled by the other's hot eyes and bitten lips, denied hastily that she had anything to do with the Prince's departure. "As for giving him his *congé*—don't be ridiculous! I've never had the chance. Your husband is not in love with me, Giulia. We've only been—playing the game."

"Ah, the game, the game, forever the game!" muttered the other between her teeth. "You are telling me the truth? For God's sake, do not lie to me! He does not love you? Oh, not in words, perhaps, but in other ways? He does not seek your lips when you are alone—seize you in his arms—"

"Rather not!" interrupted Emily succinctly. "He's never tried that sort of thing, I assure you!—or he wouldn't be here now. I hate being mauled about!"

The other sat down limply on the edge of the bed. "So!" she said in a queer, dull monotone, "that has failed! I have failed, again!"

Emily stared. "You *wanted* him to love me, Giulia?"

"Naturally! Why else should I have kept the others away from you, thrown you into his arms, made every opportunity—?"

"I suppose," said Emily slowly, flushing, "you hoped to get rid of him, so that—so that you would be free to be with Esteban?"

"Free?" The other laughed very bitterly. "When have I ever been anything but free? . . . From the moment of our marriage, when he went off to spend our wedding night with his airplane! Ah, God, free! Free for what? To fling myself to the devil? To give myself to anyone who would take me? Listen, you little cool, white, clever idiot! —I wanted him to love you, yes! You are at least a woman, are you not? I wanted him to be stirred, roused, maddened. Oh, I have heard of you,

watched you; it is a type new to him, provocative; you have had success with men! And then, when you would not have him—ah, I knew, you see, that you would not have him; you Americans under all your daring and pretense are timid, cautious virtuous as virgin ice!—then at last, hurt, not understanding, in need of consolation, he might have turned to me, his wife, one of his own people. For I know at least how to console—ah, God, yes! I have suffered enough to know how to console!"

"You mean," exclaimed Emily, too amazed by this revelation to be angry, "you really care for Mario?"

"Care!" The other shivered from head to foot. "What silly sort of word, is that: 'care'? Do you not know even the word love in your tongue? To live month after month, year after year, as near as possible to a man whose name one bears—and who prefers the company of a machine! To conceal under *plaisanteries* of one sort or another a longing that makes one sick! To study, without seeming to do so, little ways to amuse, to please, to intrigue him—and then when one has succeeded in winning from him some slight pique, an angry glance, at least, a hint of something almost personal in the manner—to have him announce, as tonight at dinner, that he was off to the ends of the earth again, anywhere to get away! Courting danger as he courts no woman, in love with nothing on earth—but death! Ah, *mama mía, mama mía!*" she moaned, rocking herself till her head touched her knees, and calling unconsciously

upon the unfailing help of childhood. "If I could but keep him near! I might win him yet, yes. But when he goes this time, he will not come back. I tell you, he will never come back!"

Emily was weeping with her, arms thrown about the rocking body. "I never dreamed, I never guessed —my dear, my dear! Why don't you tell him about it?"

The other sat erect, and dried her eyes fiercely. "At least I am not so great a fool as that! One has some little pride remaining!"

"I shouldn't have," said Emily, with sudden conviction. "Under such circumstances I should simply go to my husband and say, 'Esteban, look at me! I am your wife, and I worship you. If you do not find me loveworthy, if you don't want me for myself—don't you want at least what is in my heart? There isn't too much love in the world, at best,' I would say. 'Can you afford to throw away mine?' "

"Ah, but you see," said the other brokenly, "it is not Esteban to whom you would be speaking so eloquently, my dear! . . . And then?"

"Then—I would make him take me away, alone, to a little cottage somewhere, in the hills, I think, without even servants near us—"

The other laughed a little, on a sobbing breath, like a child. "A picturesque peasant's hut, full of vermin, eh? And, without servants? *Dio mío*, this Mario who is in love only with death would not know how to put the studs in his own shirt! And I am little better. Surely we might take only my maid?

Eh, well; once in our peasant's hut among the vermin, what then?"

"Then," said Emily, flushed but determined, "I would have a baby, Giulia. Men want children, even if they pretend they don't."

There was a long silence. The Principessa kissed Emily's cheek, and said quite gently, "But it is not the shallow little flirting wretch I thought, after all! What you propose, *cara mia*, is merely a miracle. At your age, I also believed in miracles. But—for me the age of miracles has passed."

She rose; she had regained her composure. "Ah, no, I have played my last trump, I think, and it remains only to lose, as gracefully as possible; one isn't too bad at that! You will forget these small-hour indiscretions? I must have had too much of Esteban's excellent Chablis at dinner. Good night, my very dear, and—thank you!" She was gone.

For several days Emily saw very little of either Giulia or Trastavare, although the former had so recovered her careless gayety that their conference in the dark hours began to seem like mere hysteria; a touch of the *cafard*, perhaps, that often attacks persons who live habitually at high tension. Then the Prince invited them to spend a final afternoon at his villa, since he was leaving in a day or so. They would have a sort of sunset picnic meal on the terrace—"As much of entertainment as my old country people there can manage," he explained to Emily, "and even then I shall have to borrow your excellent Anatole to assist with the service. But I should

like you to see my mother's gardens, neglected as they are at present; and also, you may be interested in the new monoplane?"

"Oh, you will take me up?" she asked eagerly. Trastavare for some reason had not invited her to fly since they left Biarritz, and she found that she rather missed the excitement of it, the titillation danger gave to her tired nerves, like overstrong coffee.

He shook his head. "Not in the monoplane, *cara signora!* It is not so safe a little family bus as the *Oie Blanche;* there are certain faults of construction; the engine is too powerful. My riggers and fitters are busy with it, which has delayed departure. Besides," he added, with a sidelong glance at Esteban, "your husband is not too happy when you fly with me, I think?"

She gave him a faint and grateful little smile, suspecting that he tried to reassure her by hinting at a jealousy which did not exist. It was some time since Esteban had cared, or known, whether she flew, or whither, or with whom.

Emily was rather curious to see the Villa Luna, which Trastavare evidently loved as much as the Principessa disliked it. The property had been his mother's favorite house; he made, so Giulia informed her, a great cult of his mother . . . "who must have been the epitome," she added, yawning, "of all the virtues which I have not!"

It was a gaunt, bare old dwelling of faded pink plaster, with a sundial over the door, the heavily

shuttered windows draped now with cobwebs, a funereal salon with monumental furniture ranged against the walls, and shrouded mirrors which seemed, even in full daylight, to reflect ghosts. But the garden, overgrown as it was with box and yew and cypress, had the charm only ancient Italian gardens know which have been much loved. The terrace, edged by a broken marble balustrade, commanded a lovely turquoise reach of Mediterranean; fountains trickled over moss, broad and shallow steps led down between banks of fuchsia and heliotrope to a secluded and half-ruined little white Temple of Love. Emily understood why this place had for generations been used by the Trastavari for their honeymoons; she thought that by the light of its namesake the Villa Luna might yet awake to love and loveliness.

"There is an acre or so of glass at the back where the Prince has his famous rose trees, Emilie; and in an upstairs loggia you will find some ancient and very ugly frescoes," volunteered Esteban, knowing his wife's odd interest in such things; but paused abruptly, evidently embarrassed to have betrayed the fact that he was less a stranger than herself at the Villa Luna. It brought her mind back with a pang to her own affairs. How often had Esteban come to this place, and why? Giulia de Trastavare, despite her secret passion for her own husband, was none the less dangerous to other men.

Tables were being set on the terrace by a flustered old major-domo, under the patronizing direction of

Anatole, when Emily and the Prince returned ahead of the others from the airdrome, where the party had been inspecting planes. There had been much learned talk of struts and helicopters, head resistance, angles of incidence and the like; all of it Greek to Emily, but apparently quite comprehensible to Esteban, with his flair for any sort of sport. No planes had been taken up because that day the mistral was blowing, quite lightly, tempered, as all things are tempered along that gentle Provençal coast, into a mere stiff land breeze; but like all experts Trastavare was very careful, and permitted his guests to take no chances. The rounded domes of the hangar sheds, rising from what had been a wide acreage of vineyard, made an odd note in the landscape, by contrast with the ancientry of the house and its yews and pointed cypresses.

"My mother would have been displeased to see them there; she so dreaded changes," commented Trastavare. "My parents were old-fashioned folk, you see; they loved their home and their children and each other."

"I did not know," commented Emily lightly, "that the domestic virtues were much practiced in upper Italian circles?"

"But, we Siennese are the simplest people in the world! You are thinking of the Milanese, like my wife. Their tastes are more subtle. I was very happy when my mother gave us this old villa for our wedding gift, though I am not here so often as I

should like, and Giulia never. She prefers, naturally, the season at Deauville, or at Biarritz."

"Why 'naturally'?" asked Emily, upon whom the charm of this quiet, haunted place began to grow. "Because the Riviera is no longer smart?"

He shrugged. "Because at Deauville and Biarritz there are not memories, perhaps." He added after a moment, "We, too, came here for the honeymoon, when the war was over. But—the honeymoon is not always a happy time, signora!"

Emily had a way of eliciting unexpected confidences from people, often when she did not want them. This came too close to Giulia's midnight confession to be quite comfortable: she was glad to see the others returning; without their hostess, however.

"My wife lingers, doubtless, to put the new monoplane to bed," commented the Prince, smiling. "There is a woman who makes a fuss over engines as if they were—puppy dogs. It used to be the racing cars; now it is the speed planes." A remark which reminded Emily of Giulia's own complaint that Trastavare loved machinery as he did not love people. Who was at fault here? she wondered. Somebody!

At that moment the sudden loud whir of a rising plane startled them. All looked, except the Prince, who did not trouble to turn his head.

"Ah, I thought so," he remarked. "I knew she would never be able to resist trying out the new monoplane as soon as I took my eye off it!"

Everyone stood watching the powerful upward

sweep of the great winged thing into the golden reaches of the twilight, everyone except Trastavare. "How wonderful she is!" said Emily. "I never knew another woman like her—so frank and brusque and utterly ruthless, and yet when you know her so curiously sweet!"

"There never was another woman like her; which is perhaps fortunate. . . . What is she doing now?" he asked, at Emily's little sudden exclamation.

"The most amazing things—twists, and dips, and sudden dives—oh! oh! I had no idea she could fly like this!"

"She is a good pilot," he said indifferently, "but a better teacher, because she flies more by theory than by instinct. She is, in fact, the best instructor I have."

"Oh, but watch her now: she's doing somersaults! Surely that's not safe, so close to the ground? Why don't you look, Mario?"

"I never watch her," he said in an odd voice. "I cannot."

"Cannot! Why?" demanded Emily, suddenly staring at him.

"It terrifies me," muttered the man who specialized in danger.

The truth struck Emily like a blow. She caught at his arm. "Mario! You love that woman!"

"Oh, yes," he said, still in that odd, lowered tone. "So madly that I cannot bear to be long near her; it is too dangerous for me. My wife, do you see, interests herself only in the unattainable."

Emily's words tumbled over themselves in their effort to reach him. "No, no, my dear fellow, you are wrong! . . . you do not understand!"

He stopped her with a weary gesture. "It is you who do not understand. Yet, you must have seen for yourself—the Russian, this young Urruty—" He had evidently forgotten for the moment that he spoke to Esteban's wife. "It is always like that, has been from the day of our marriage—man after man, lover after lover—if they are fortunate enough to become her lovers! *Chi lo sa?* Sometimes I doubt it.—Excitement is what she must have, is the thing she lives upon; emotion, ever-renewed. What thrill could there be in the possession of an enslaved husband?"

"But—" gasped Emily.

"Listen, I will tell you something," he interrupted. "One could forgive her enslavement of men, if she did not try to unman them. Even me she has tried to unman—yes! On the night of our marriage, when I had but the necessary time for the ceremony before I must return to my command, did she make that easier for me? Did she give Godspeed and bid me acquit myself well, as a woman of her race should have done? No! she begged me to remain; she clung about my neck; she would have disgraced me—so that I had to slip away from her by stealth."

"She loved you, Mario," pleaded Emily, pitiful with her new understanding.

He smiled bitterly. "Perhaps. Yet when I came

home to her at last, here, where I had bade her to wait for me, here in this house of my parents, the gift of my own mother—she was not waiting alone. No! Already there was a lover with her, a young officer whom she had nursed in the hospital wards; and who needed, she said, to be made well in the country."

"One of her patients, Mario!"

"What was one of her patients doing here, on our belated honeymoon?" demanded Trastavare sternly. "The boy was mad about her, of course. I found them the first day, embracing, there in our little Temple of Love"—he pointed ironically to the lower terrace—"and when she saw me standing near, she laughed and kissed him."

"What did you do?" breathed Emily, aghast.

"Me? I remained, naturally, until our guest had quite finished his convalescence here. Then I also left. I suggested an annulment of our marriage, in case she cared to marry her officer, but Giulia did not wish for that; she had not so enjoyed marriage, she said, that she desired to repeat the experience.—Ah, I know very well how I should hate a woman who so mocks, so despises all that I hold most sacred! Yet —I cannot watch her in the air. I am too well aware of the risk."

Emily saw only too clearly what had happened here. Misunderstanding, pride, jealousy that would not admit it was jealousy, no chance really to know one another, to make the necessary readjustments of marriage; a world too much with them, which would

not let them be. It was, she saw in an instant's sharp vision, exactly the sort of thing that was happening now to her and Esteban. . . .

But for the moment there was no time for her own trouble. Her heart beat high with generous impulse. Once again she found thrust upon her the rôle of *dea ex machina.* She held in her two hands human destiny. True, this was a confidence, as the confession of Giulia had been a confidence; but if ever two confidences were meant to be violated in the name of happiness, these were they.

"Listen, my friend," she said in her turn, "I will tell you something!" . . .

But what she had to say was never told; for at that moment the thing happened. She saw it happening in the faces near her, interested, admiring one minute, the next white and horrified. The loud whirring drone of the motor had suddenly ceased. Esteban sprang across the terrace, crying out to her, "Do not look, my Emilie, do not look!"

But Emilie had already looked, had already seen the monoplane pause high in air like a shot bird, and plunge, and drop. . . . They were all out in the garden, then, running toward the airdrome; but past them, as if they had been standing still, ran Giulia's husband, moaning. . . .

A famous German surgeon who happened to be at Nice came from the door of a room in the Villa Luna, shaking his head at those who stood there waiting.

"You mean she will not live?" whispered Emily.

"*Ach ja,* she will live; she may even in time recover health," boomed the great man, not troubling to lower his voice. "But when—that, man does not know! If the amputation goes well—"

Somebody groaned, "Oh, hush, she might hear you!" Too late—she had heard. The eyes of the bandaged, muffled figure in the pillows rested upon them a moment, tragically. Then they moved, with infinite weary effort, till they found the man beside the bed, standing there tense, with clenched fists.

"Ah, Mario, *povero,*" they heard her whisper, "what a sell for you, my friend! A cripple! You will surely be able to—annul me—now!"

And they heard the man's sobbing answer as he threw himself on his knees beside her, and flung his arms with fierce protectiveness across the broken body: "I shall have you to myself at last, *cara, carissima!* I shall never again need to share you with the world!"

Giulia had found the way to keep her husband near. . . .

On the yacht *Gathid,* there was consternation. Emily the cool, the imperturbable, the perfect hostess, the composed woman of the world—Emily had, in the expressive phrase of her sex, "gone to pieces." She had gone to pieces quite thoroughly in her husband's arms, where she wept aloud and refused to be comforted, even by the sound of the anchor rattling as it came aboard.

"I want to go home!" she sobbed. "I want to go home!"

"But do not suffer so, my heart; do not distress yourself so terribly!" murmured Esteban, the tears streaming unnoted down his own cheeks as he held her. "Think of them as happy now, as together, like you and me!"

Emily continued to sob, helplessly and quite unreasonably: "I want to go home! I want to go home this very minute!"

Esteban said over her shoulder to some one near by. "You hear? She asks to go home, Tubal! she has had enough of it, at last! She *asks* to go to our home! We have succeeded! You were right, as always. But, *madre de Dios!* what a chance we took!"

Later Emily recalled this aside, and realized that their quietly observant friend, the *chenhango* who had arranged their marriage, was still doing his neighborly best by them; but at the time she had, like a seasick person, no room in her thoughts for anything but her own acute nostalgia.

"I want my babies," she moaned. "I want *la madre*, and Pedro, and the *etcheonda!* I want you!" —as if he were not already holding her as close as possible. "Oh, Steban, *can't* we find some quicker way to get there than by boat! The automobile? An express train?"

Here the capable Bette took a hand in affairs. She stood on tiptoe to whisper something into her

brother's ear. He struck his hands together with a sudden laugh.

"But, of course! It is the very moment for the surprise! Listen, my Emilie. There is a quicker way to go than either automobile or express train, if you will entrust yourself to me? There is the *Oie Blanche.*"

She stared up at him. "The *Oie Blanche!* Giulia's plane?"

"But yes! Why not?" He grinned like a pleased child over the success of his surprise. "It is now your plane; I bought it for you in Biarritz. First I consulted my grandmother, who thought it might be very useful to have about the place, now that there is so much coming and going. *La madre* enjoys modern improvements, as you know; she had the first iron cookstove in our valleys, the first American sewing machine; and she thinks now of installing a wireless apparatus so that she may hear American music; she has a great curiosity to know what is this 'jazz.' She has given us the mule pasture behind the stables for a landing ground, so—"

"But," gasped Emily, "you don't know how to handle a plane!"

"Me? I am even an expert pilot, though I have done little flying till recently," he said with becoming modesty. "You did not know? I think there are many things you do not know about your husband, Emilie! Bette found me out, but she understands how to keep a secret, that one. You seemed so much

to enjoy flying the *Oie Blanche* that I was unwilling you should fly her only with—other people."

Emily caught at him, her face transfigured. "Esteban! you *were* jealous, then? You were jealous all the time of poor Mario?"

He hung his head, with his engaging sheepishness. "Naturally I was jealous, *gatchutcha!* Am I not a man? But one does not care to exhibit such weakness. Trastavare is a fine fellow, too, though he has not the build for the *pelota.* I shall never fly so well as he, never; but Donna Giulia says I am the best pupil she has trained."

And then Emily understood completely, understood with shame. "That is what you and Giulia have been doing all this time together! She has only been teaching you to fly?"

"Certainly. What else?" He lifted her head with a hand under her chin. "So, you did not trust me, Emilie? Yet I have trusted you," he said, very gravely and gently. "I have had jealousy on your account, and fear; but not distrust. I waited, only, as Tubal bade me wait. Do you not realize what it means to one of our race to become a husband, a father? *'Eschaldene fededen,'* Emilie—Basque and faithful.— Besides," he shrugged, "have not you, who are so clever, learned this true thing: that a man's affections are not like cold viands, which may be warmed over with seasoning and served again? Ah, no! Once cold—*pfui!* they are like cold eels: they cannot be recooked." . . .

Prince Trastavare himself saw them off some hours

later from the airdrome of the Villa Luna, with a few quiet parting instructions. Esteban must look out for the *remou*, that sudden change in the air which follows changes in the earth's surface; he must watch his altimeter, and keep well up, so that there was room for a glide if he stalled—the *Oie Blanche* was a natural glider; she would not "pancake" as the monoplane had done.

"The mistral has cleared things for you, too; there should be no bumpy air today. I am glad you are not afraid, after yesterday," he added steadily. "Giulia would hate very much to have caused anyone fear of the sport she loved."

When he would have kissed Emily's hand in farewell, she drew it away and kissed his lips instead. "That is for both of you, from us," she said; and Esteban confirmed it with a quick, hard handclasp.

The land slipped away from them; the sea, with a last dip of the pennant from the toy yacht *Gathid*, became a remote blue river. Anatole, bent over the wheel of his speeding car like a Grand Prix racer, gave up his final frantic effort to be on hand in case of the worst, and recommended them personally to the care of God.

"Some day," thought Emily dreamily, "I shall be coming back to this world we are leaving now, in one form or other, ghost or woman; but not alone, never, never alone. Always with Esteban! The world is not a safe place for me alone," she decided. "Heaven is safer, even by airplane."

They talked very little through the telephone

apparatus made necessary by the roar of the engine. She did not wish to distract Esteban's attention from the controls, from the terrain map hung beside him —though he had laughed a little at the idea of needing a map to show the way home. "Am I not Basque?" he said. Air, sea, earth—it was all one to a Basque, as to a homing pigeon.

Now and again she turned to smile back at him, and always his return smile was ready for her, eager, glad. Below them passed, rapidly as in a cinema, the toy fields of France, provinces, rivers, and little hills which were strange to her, seen from so far above; yet Esteban knew them all, and sometimes called out a name to her through the speaking trumpet.

Words from Marpessa came to her memory:

"We two in Heaven dancing;—Babylon
Shall flash and murmur and cry from under us . . .
We two in Heaven running; continents
Shall lighten, ocean unto ocean flash,
And rapidly laugh till all the world is warm."

For the first time, Emily felt no terror of the air; it seemed to her only another, gentler ocean. The steady roar of the engine soothed her as they dipped and rose upon invisible billows; she knew that close behind sat Esteban, sensitive touch on the controls, keen seaman's eyes alert for danger, ready with a quiet reassurance if they dropped too suddenly in an air pocket, if the engine stilled a little as they coasted

down the wind. Presently, touching her on the shoulder, he handed her a roll of bread, a packet of chocolate, a small flask of wine. How like *la madre's* grandson, she thought, to have remembered food! She ate obediently, and drank, and later dozed awhile, rushing through high space at a hundred miles an hour.

Again he touched her shoulder, pointing eagerly. Before them, well below, was a tip of snow that caught the sun with a flash of diamonds. It was the Ping Pené, in the Carlitte district, where the peasants believe the Ark to have rested instead of upon Mount Ararat. They were approaching the Pyrenees; a very different approach from her first, when their panting engine mounted up and up until they entered and were lost in the vagueness of a cloud. Now peaks and clouds were below them, passing rapidly; yet once again came to Emily that curious sense of permanence, of peace, and of enduring strength.

Far off shone a streak of silver on the horizon—the Atlantic! She leaned over, watching, waiting. Things became larger, more discernible; the tiny patchwork of fields at odd angles, the steepled towns, the miniature grazing herds which did not lift their heads to look at the strange thing passing over, with its attendant shadow long upon the hills. They were accustomed by now to the great mail planes on the daily air route between Morocco and Toulouse. Emily thought of how the soldiers of Charlemagne

sleeping near would have stared. . . . The people in the scattered villages had never seen a plane fly so close. The streets became white with upturned faces. All at once, near a three-arched belfry that she recognized, thrilling, Emily noted an antlike figure on a donkey set forth at full gallop; which was undoubtedly Hermose the umbrella mender, ambitious to be in at the finish.

"Look, look!" she cried to Esteban, forgetting the telephone. "I see the tower of L'Ey Kahatcia! We are almost there!"

But Esteban did not answer; he was preparing to descend—by far the most dangerous part of the adventure.

Unfortunately Madame Urruty, not expecting them, had seized the frugal opportunity to make some final usage of the pasture she had allotted to Esteban for a landing field, so that it was occupied at the moment by grazing beasts. Esteban saw this too late. He set his teeth, and muttered a prayer to St. Blaise, patron of animals. The engine paused, with a sickening stillness.

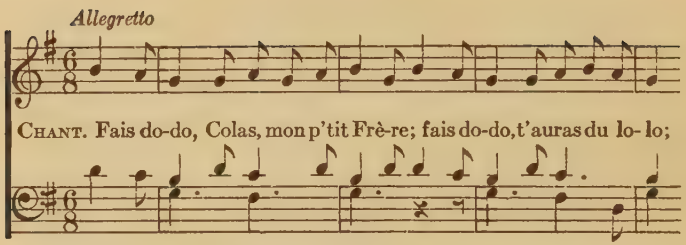
"*Garde à toi, Emilie!*" he cried strongly. They landed; touched the earth in a series of long, leaping bounds, threading an intricate way among young mules who brayed their horror, and cattle who scattered for their lives; the lead cow zigzagging just ahead of them, tail straight up in the air, gaping back over her wooden collar with a face of ludicrous dismay.

Esteban was laughing aloud, but pale, as he undid the safety belts and lifted his wife to terra firma. "Who says I am not a pilot?" he boasted. "If I had but injured one of those idiotic creatures—*pfui!* What my grandmother would have done to me! As it is, our cows will give nothing but butter for a week. But watch my father and *la madre;* they will show no surprise whatever at the manner of our arrival. It would be beneath their dignity!"

As he spoke, small Wally appeared on the horizon, with old Nagarro in close attendance, both dog and boy speechless with agitation; followed by the entire population of the farm and its neighborhood, in various stages of enthusiasm. But true to prophecy, Madame Urruty and her son Pedro awaited the sky voyagers calmly at their door, as if visitors were in the habit of thus descending upon them from high heaven. Pedro knocked out the dottel of his pipe on the door-side bench, to bid them welcome; the matriarch said nothing at all, but kissed them on either cheek with lips which trembled, held them close with hands which shook a little, since she was growing old.

"Where is my baby?" demanded Emily tensely.

"At this hour, naturally, she sleeps!" reproved the matriarch; the shadows were already long in the barnyard.

From above came the soft Creole tones of Angélique humming, with strong negroid inflections, Bette's little familiar lullaby of home:

She broke off with a startled, "Who dat?" as Emily came sobbing and running up the stairs; followed by Esteban, his son riding his shoulders. The Urruty family were reunited.

PROPER NAMES[1]

Abbadie
Aherbelste, deity of black rocks
Arahaïa
Baïgorisc, deity of red earth
Baïgorry, a god
Bikavioa
Chiquita
Damasa
Deburria, the devil
De Maytie
Ducontentia
Elizoaca
Esponda
Esteban
Essetore
Fagus, deity of the beech
Gerbera
Hercule
Hermose
Lamminak, fairy people
Lastra
Laxarrou, god of high pastures
Licerio
Luzaïde, the Light-giver
Maïttagorri, the Earth
Marcós
Olhagarray
Olhaiby
Pantchika
Pilar
Ramón
Trufadec, Puck
Urruty
Zubaïos

[1] The author has compiled the above glossary entirely from her personal note-books, not having access to a Basque-English dictionary; and therefore asks indulgence for possible inaccuracies.
E. M. K.

WORDS AND PHRASES

National anthem:
Guernakako arbola
Adoratzen zaitugu
Arbola santua
May song:
Yainkoaren Anna
Anna guyizona
Dezagem Maita
Bethi! Bethi!
(Translation:
Mother of God
Mother all good
How we love you
Always! Always!)
Basa Andre, a nymph
Basa Jaun, a wood sprite
Bouhameshak, gypsies
Erditse, goddess of fruitfulness
Errege Jan, a song
Eschaldene fededen, "Basque and faithful"
Eskualdunak, the Basque people
Eskual-Herria, Basque country
Etcheco Jauna, head of the house
Etchekandere, a woman head of the house
Euskara, Basque language
L'Ey Kahatcia, main hall of a great house
St. Blaise, patron saint of animals
Tree of Guernica, the Holy Oak
aïeta-anna, the grandmother
alcalde, head-man of community
bailie, a district
barratinas, scarlet caps
basauflûte, a musical instrument
béret, Basque cap
blaid, term in pelota
bouquetin, a deer
cagots, descendants of lepers
calle mayor, main street
cantara, the announcer of scores
capuchon, a large cape

carro, a wagon
carrica dantza, a dance
cascarots, men dancers
chastel, a château
chenhango, neighbor
chirilion, a small flute
cordonnier, maker of espadrilles
domec, noble house
espadrilles (or spadrillas) rope-soled canvas slippers
etcheonda, family home
farandole, a dance
fonda, an inn
fors, laws
gaou-one, good night
gatchutcha, a pet name
gitanos, gypsies
gobelet danza, a dance
haras, stud stables
hydromel, honey wine
ilerri, graveyard
infançon, or infanzon, a lesser noble
irrezina (or irrintzina), battle cry or hunting call
juntas, election meetings
manichalak, blacksmith
la manille, a card game
metayer, tenant farmer
mimule, monkey flower
muss, a card game
mutchikoak, a mazurka
narbela, knife
pelotari, a pelota player
pilée, orangeade
rebot, a term in pelota
seguidilla, Spanish song
Sieur, or Seigneur, old Basque titles
tartane, two-wheeled hooded cart
tantos, scoring in pelota
yarleku, flat tombstones
zamalzaïn, head-dancer